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TANNER FAMILY CHRONICLES – A FULL HOUSE CHRONOLOGY

The story of the Tanners from 1940-2007, and onward

Based on the TV series Full House

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This is a work of fiction designed to fill in gaps in the timeline of "Full House," explain what happened between scenes and episodes, plus before and after the series, and explain parts that may cause confusion - in other words, show how things weave together so almost every so-called mistake is shown to not be one at all. So please, run a search on any episode or question you have, you should find it.

Is it canon? The answer to almost all of it is "yes." Explanations are all workable and quite plausible. Footnotes are used for these, plus to refer to episodes. In numerous cases the explanation given is the only one possible. A few - with two or more possibilities - were guessed at, or fan consensus was used. still, almost all of this should be considered canon for "Full House" – and even "Fuller House," where the post-"Full House" TVU (Sectiion VII) answers the question: "What if D.J. and Steve remain together?" It fits the wholesome premise and characters using ordinary processes of deduction. All are invited to accept it as canon, also, and to urge Warner Brothers to do the same.

INTRODUCTIONS

Hi, I'm Danny Tanner. I raised three wonderful girls with my awesome wife Pam till 1987, then with the help of my best friend and my brother-in-law after her tragic death. I took incredible amounts of pictures and home videos that have helped jog memories for the creation of this chronicle of our lives.

Pam was a large part of this, too, as she loved to celebrate life. Some would say I wanted to feel like she was still here after her death. I have to admit, that's probably true. At times I was overly sentimental, overly protective, sometimes even just overly over. Even so, we had a great time, and always made it through our struggles. This is about that, covering our life and times from the point of view of our members.

I'm Pam Tanner. I'm celebrating with the angels. Danny and the others used my diary in part - found tucked away in the crawl spaces above the attic after ten years. It, memories, and videos form the basis for my reflections, which the family wrote together. They probably don't mention how late I often was and such, but love means overlooking little quirks, just laughing about them with the other person.

I can't believe how in TV and Book Universe my girls turned out like me; especially D.J.,who gt people together to add a couple dozen pages of what's called NetU years after this was written. You'll see what I mean.

Of course, on TV she and Michelle were like me and Jesse; thankfully she started younger and Michelle turned out great. In the Book Unvierse, she was so dedicated - there's a very sweet surprise for readers, and special rewards waiting up here for her.

I'm Donna Jo. I have two roles - my TV and beyond role and my much tenderer, more mothering Book Universe role - to share. I've also done a lot of other things, as I've always loved to help people - though in the TV Universe it seems like I bore 90% of the load in some areas, which drove me crazy at times. But, everything worked out okay.

Hey, how are you today? I'm Stephanie Judith Tanner. I've got such a great life. I teach ballet, and write free lance stuff with D.J. sometimes. My mom died when I was five, and I'll be telling my story here, too; I've got a unique Book Universe role, too..

Hi, I'm Michelle Elizabeth Tanner. I graduated high school in 2004. Like my sisters, I want a big family who I can raise as much as I can. I want to give my kids a warm, loving mother who is a big part of their lives. You'll see a few differences with D.J., Steph, and I that show how little things and choices impact people though.

I'm Jesse Katsopolis. I moved in to help my brother-in-law raise his girls. It was so much fun. I used to be the 1980s version of the Fonz, but moving in opened up parts of me I never knew existed. Plus, it brought me the chance to meet my great wife, Becky.

I always kidded Pam about how much she loved to brag about the family and be the center of her girls' lives. Well, Pam, now I know what you felt like, with my family. I remember some of the talks we'd have, when I'd come around. If you were here, well, I'm sure the readers can tell which of your parts I helped with, too. Some of it was guessing, but I knew you well enough, Sis. I think I was pretty accurate.

I'm Rebecca Donaldson. I kept my last name since I was in media; it was easier for people to remember. Hey, my husband didn't mind, he had his own stage name for a while. I have a wonderful family, and lots of great memories to share. Not as many as the others, but I hope my contributions help.

I'm Joey Gladstone. I helped my best friend Danny raise his girls, and really got to feel like a father, for years before meeting the love of my life – well, lives, since things are a bit different in what you'll see as NetU. I'm so glad to be part of so many lives after having some real turmoil growing up. Our house was always full of love at the Tanners'. They even put up with my crazy comedy. (Does Popeye laugh.)

Hola, Readeritos. Huh; that sounded like double Doritos. You know, re-Doritos. Anyway, I'm Kimmy Gibbler. Thanks to my best friend D.J., I'm where I am today. Which isn't much of a place, but it's somewhere. I have a very slight learning disorder, but that was made a lot bigger because my family was on the weird side, and not very supportive. Oh, and I never studied, either. In fact, I felt thinking was overrated. But, D.J. kept pushing and pushing, and here I am. I'll be lending some of my valuable insight into how I helped these people, too; even though it wasn't always welcomed.

HI, I'm Nicky. That's the boy spelling – I like that and not Nick because our grandpa was Nick, and Willie Mays kept that "-y" sound on the end of his name.

And I'm Alex. I don't have a "-y" sound because it would sound really weird. We won't have a lot to say, but we will have some.

Do we have anything else to say in the intro, Alex?

Well, Nicky, we could do an Abbott and Costello routine, except I don't remember what's the name of the man on first base?

No, What's the name of the man on second… (Sighs) We'll see you in the 1990s, okay? Say so long, Alex.

So long, Alex.

Hi, I'm Tommy Fuller. (Waves to Pam.) I found 'em, thanks. I had the best wife, D.J., and wonderful boys. Then, I died in the line of duty. People call me a hero, but just as heroic are my wife and those who love and help her. True love is giving of yourself. I grew to love D.J., Danny, Stephanie, Michelle, all of them; it's what they were all about. Going back to Pam saying, "Give away a smile, it's free." Our NetU doesn't get much coverage, so we'll lend pre-show bits, too. Steve has a lot more sections, but we're here to have fun, so you can meet the wonderful boys that rose out of D.J. and I being together for many wonderful years, as we tell the whole story from start to fantstisc finishes.

Hi, I'm Jackson. I don't have lots of sections, either. Knowing Dad died in the line of duty doesn't make it less painful. I take after our Uncle Jesse a bit in dealing with it, while Max is like Grandpa Danny. Guess that means little Tommy Jr. will be like Joey, huh? It's true what Mark Twain said; history doesn't repeat, but it rhymes.

Yeah, I Googled that. Figures, huh? Times changed a lot in the decades since Pam's death, but one thing doesn't. that unconditional love we have for each other.

Hiey, I'm Max. I don't have a lot of lines in this diary of sorts. But I'll have lots of fun here, where there are plenty of people to pick me up, and always plenty of hugs.

Tommy, Jr.: Hi. This is cool.

Hey, Max again. Tommy Jr. has even fewer lines at his age. You weren't really expecting the works of Shakespeare, were you?

Hey, I'm Ramona Gibbler. I didn't think it was a good idea to move into the Fuller house. I think my mom's a bit nuts at times; of coruse, a lot of people did.

Once I got here, I realized I had a special part to play in a great tradition of unconditional love. In the same way, like the others, I'll add bits and pieces throughout; we'll mostly be in post TVU parts. Because it's a great place. Like Jesse learned months after he moved in, parts of me opened up I didn't know were there.

Hi, I'm the narrator. I list 'Full House" episodes and where they happened in the calendar year, and keep track of things along the way. I use footnotes to clue you in to episodes and other stuff they refer to. People know some of the Tanners' lives from "Full House." But even that is only a small portion.

Less than 1% of a sitcom family's life is shown; a half hour out of 168 per week, for less than half the weeks of the year. "Fuller House" math is similar; episodes are just in order, unlike "Full House" as you'll see. TV is like a pen pal's letter; they don't tell you what happens every day.

Showing that was the purpose of this in 2004-2009; one helper said they wanted "something to explain all the little things."

Still, I have a lot less time than when we did this, and no e-mails for most who helped via AIM and Yahoo groups. "Fuller House" was great and deserves more than 5% of the TVU part. So, someone can expand the "Fuller House" part. For now, "Fuller House" things are scattered among partrs and in footnotes, plus some in this new NetU; there's no time to even list episodes.

It is, after al, a "Full House" Chronology. It's just now, it shows how Steve marrying D.J. right away went according to fan feeback. Characters have comments everywhere, even BookU, not just NetU.

So, now you can see even more than that small percentage you saw on the show. Not 100% - that'd take way more pages, and "I brushed my teeth" gets boring after 500 repetitions. Still, you'll have things explained and see many new things, learn new facts, and feel even more like you've watched a real family with historical accuracy, like 1978 bowl games. There will be interludes to assist you, a table of contents to steer by, and something wonderful at the end - a Book Universe that not only explains differences, it depicts even more love, warmth, and happiness, with its own unique, heartwarming story.

I. THE PREHISTORIC YEARS - COMING TO AMERICA - 1940-1969

Okay, not truly pre-historic; that would be the Flintstones. But, it's prehistoric in that it's only a year after the 1939 World's Fair and the demonstration of television. It speaks of some events that happen well before Danny and Pam were born, and wind up being quite important in numerous ways.

War raged on two continents, and Hitler and his madmen had begun to overrun Western Europe. Greece trembled at the prospect of Italian or German attack. The miraculous evacuation of troops at Dunkirk had recently occurred, and Winston Churchill vowed that the British would never surrender.

In this setting, a vibrant Christian, full of life, named Georgios Katsopolous wed his sweetheart, Gina, in the summer of 1940. She was a lovely young lady, he was a widower with a daughter, Larissa. Larissa's mother died in childbirth in 1935, and he was very devoted to his little girl. Larissa didn't mind his beard, but Gina did, so he shaved it.[1] Larissa remained in Greece, married, and bore several children, including the cousin that named Jesse godfather of his daughter, Melina.

The songwriter was right - the world will always welcome lovers. The couple celebrated life even in the midst of great hardship. Georgios, known better to viewers as Papouli, was drafted when the Italians invaded that fall, but not before he and his wife conceived a baby boy named Nick. Nicholas comes from a word meaning "victorious people." They considered themselves victorious even in the midst of turmoil.

Despite such positive thoughts, 1940s Greece was not the best place to raise a child. It featured incredibly gut-wrenching strife and turmoil, like a century of Jerry Springer shows rolled into one. The Greeks fought off the Italians, the Germans conquered Greece, and even before their liberation a civil war erupted. Order was finally restored in 1949, four years after World War Two ended. When asked what kind of varmints were the toughest he ever had to get rid of, Papouli - an exterminator - always joked that, "The Nazi infestation of 1941 was filled with the worst kind of vermin you could imagine. They were by far the toughest, they took years to stop."

The fighting kept him away from home a lot, and left Nick without a father figure. This, combined with enemy hostility, bombing, and fighting near his home town left Nick with two things. One was an anger problem that resulted in lots of yelling, because Nick had become so good at bottling things up till he felt he could let loose. The other was an intense desire to go to America, the land of opportunity.

Papouli and Gina settled in San Francisco with Nick in 1956. Once they arrived, officials - as sometimes happened with foreign names - mixed up the spelling as they applied for things. This, by the way, is how names changed, if the person didn't choose to Americanize it. It wasn't just getting off the boat; places like Ellis Island went by the ship's passenger list, though some were misspelled on those lists.

Here, the family was listed as "Katsopolis." The bureaucrat working for Social Security though of Metropolis, Superman's home. The family name was now Katsopolis, though "-olis" is the ending for a city. Papouli let it slide, laughing it off as he often did with trouble. They all kept that spelling.

Papouli and Gina planned to return when things were more plentiful in Greece - they loved their mother country, and their families were there. Nick couldn't just wait and

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[1] "Greek Week"

come to America right out of school, though. It was much easier to come if one already had a skill, or at least a sponsor. So, Papouli worked and helped Nick start his own extermination business once Nick graduated from high school.

Nick had learned English in anticipation of coming to the United States. He read and studied constantly, because he had a zest for conquering whatever came his way. By overcoming obstacles, he felt he was getting rid of those demons that haunted him from his early years. However, that also meant somewhat shunning his native culture - he didn‘t even want to speak Greek in the family home in San Francisco.

This is where Irene enters the picture. She had a similar zest for life. When she met Nick Katsopolis, in December, 1957 - the day Elvis was drafted[2] - she was four years older and already married.[3] Nick was assisting Papouli in doing extermination work in the apartment where Irene and her husband lived. She was twenty, and would soon celebrate becoming pregnant with Pam. Her parents were immigrants from elsewhere.

A tragic worksite accident happened in late fall of 1958. Suddenly, Irene was a widow. Papouli and Gina quickly offered whatever support she might need. It was the

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[2] "Our First Christmas Show" - it says they met that day, nothing more

[3] A split decision requiring the quoting of the plurality opinion, which is also plausible, this one time.

"The majority based its decision of Irene having been married once before on: 1. Many fans complain that Jesse and Pam don't look like siblings, and Pam's girls look more like Pam; 2. Melina looks Greek and different from Michelle, despite having the "same face'; 3. Pam's apparent good nature versus Jesse's, making her seem less affected by parental fighting, and her not engaging in Greek customs; and, 4. Nick and Irene having conceived Pam before marriage is against the morals of "Full House." We dissent.

"We feel the bevy of fans claiming Pam "doesn't look anything like Jesse, Nick, or Irene" and thus cannot be from Greek ancestry misinterpret the genetic factors. It is possible for Pam to have blonde hair and be Greek, as there are dominant and recessive genes. The dominant ones would cause her to have a somewhat darker complexion and look more like Jesse. However, it's entirely plausible recessive genes, which do not appear consistently, could cause Pam to be born with looks that more closely resemble her and Danny's girls. She would then pass them on. It is also possible, though less so, that Irene dyed her hair. As to Melina looking more Greek than Michelle, she still appeared similar enough that Joey talked about them being "identical cousins." While he is a jokester and it's true that "everyone has a twin" (because of those recessive genes coming out), we believe Pam could have been Greek.

"As to her nature and customs, it is quite possible for siblings to be of very different natures, one rebellious, one very docile. Note that Nick might have been much more docile were it not for the war. Also, even if she saw them fighting from the beginning, she could always spend time with Papouli and Gina and a few years after they leave meet Danny, thereby avoiding the biggest battles. While Jesse would enjoy egging them on, Pam would retreat to a shade tree and write (D.J.'s and somewhat Stephanie's talent) or play sports with neighbor girls or boys (like Steph and Michelle). Plus, if Papouli is the immigrant, and Nick considers himself a first-generation American, then surely the Greek influence would go down with her, anyway. The real issue is that Danny and the girls don't do anything Greek. And, that can easily be explained by it reminding them of Pam's death except in spurts like when Papouli comes. It is also not certain that Pam followed Greek customs less than Jesse – though granted it is just as likely neither followed them to a great extent.

"We believe it more plausible that Nick and Irene conceived and were forced to marry, as it wouldn't markedly affect Pam, as shown above. True, it is not the normal morals of "Full House," but there is already one Kathy Santoni, why not another? What Irene says to Pam later in this Chronology is typical of what mothers think if a daughter elopes and marries like that, that doesn't show one way or the other. The majority makes good points, and dominant genes being dominant, the "Pam from a first marriage" argument is compelling. However, the early deaths by accident seem a bit too coincidental.

"Nothing would change substantially if Nick and Irene conceived Pam and were forced to marry; nothing at all in the TV years and later. Indeed, it's interesting that so few people considered that Pam could have been adopted, which would explain her not looking like Irene or Nick, but that would still require a somewhat quick marriage. Either way, we respectfully dissent from the majority."

right thing to do for a young widow.

Nick had persevered through hard times. When she told Nick, then still just a casual friend, he'd opened his arms and let her cry on his shoulder. He continued to assist her, and they found they liked each other after a while. Nick wanted to know when the time was right to make his move and start dating her.

As it turned out, he didn't have to wait - time spent with him was a welcome break for Irene. She'd leave Pam with her parents or with Papouli and Gina, and go out for a nice dinner. Before they knew it, they were falling in love. They argued quite a bit at times. But, they were careful never to do it in front of the children, and if they did, they made a rule - never walk away angry. They would violate that rule in later years, but only after Pam was well into her teenage years and not very impressionable.

Nick's fiery nature led to an unyielding desire to succeed. He started his own exterminating business in 1961. Once it was going for a year, he knew he could support Irene and Pam. Now, it was time to pop the question. She said yes! He later felt he'd rushed things - he was only 21 when they married, she 25. However, while the age difference was not a traditional one for people their age, they still made the best of it. They married in April, 1962. Hermes - who later went by a middle name of Jesse - was born the following April.[4]

For them to be able to afford their own home, Irene worked for a while. She was an operator. This job has mostly disappeared, but long before the Internet, people needed a way to get phone numbers really fast. The "0" on the telephone - which back then was the last digit in a counterclockwise circle - was the one people dialed to get Irene. They had to say, "Please provide the number for Pete's Pizza Palace," and she would give it after a few seconds of trying to understand a real tongue twister like that.

Of course, if the number wasn't listed, she would have to say it was unlisted - but Pete wouldn't sell much pizza that way, so she'd always be able to find Pete's Pizza Palace, even if she had trouble saying it. Nobody delivered then, so the caller would have to go get it. That was okay, though, because the cars back then were so cool!

Irene was almost always home when Pam got home from school. Papouli and Gina were there to take care of Pam in the summer, and of Hermes all day, till 1967. Then, Irene quit her job; the family felt well off enough she didn't have to work. They bought a house and moved in early March of 1968.

Papouli was always Greek in his heart. He longed to return, while Nick had adopted America as his own. So, in 1968, Papouli and Gina went back to Greece

More importantly, in 1968, young Danny Tanner and best friend Joey Gladstone lived in San Francisco. They went to school together - ironically the same as Jesse and Pam for a month, till Nick and Irene moved their family in March. They all attended the same high school. Danny was a good athlete who wrestled and lettered in track. Joey loved sports, but mostly when mixed with comedy; he was the mascot.[5]

Danny and Joey came from families of turmoil. Joey's parents were always fighting, even after they got divorced. He'd moved into the district from where his dad

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[4] "The Legend of Ranger Joe" - Jesse was a middle name, as it's unlikely they'd think of it otherwise. The "Pal Joey" flashback has him called Jesse in 1968 in preschool, when he wasn't quite five, but he could have asked to be called Jesse for a while to avoid being teased, with Kindergarten the "last straw" that caused him to go by Jesse for good. "Fuller House" also mentions it.

[5] "Lovers and Other Tanners," (Danny was the "Steel String Bean") and "Divorce Court," Joey was "Ollie, the Fighting Oyster."

had been stationed for a couple years. His mom was frustrated, and really didn't want to move again; his dad was in the military and they moved often. Joey had recently come from Detroit. [6] Danny's parents had divorced and his mother recently remarried,[7] with the kids changing their last names to match their step-dad's, Tanner.

The two met February 23, 1968.[8] Joey's family almost moved away, making Danny very nervous about losing his friend - he hated change. Danny considered the friendship to have begun the date he learned it was certain that Joey would stay in the area.[9] When Joey's parents divorced, his mom looked for and found a job in San Francisco. His dad stayed after the divorce for a couple years, to try and help, but finally left for good. Joey stayed at Danny's while his mom worked.

Nick didn't pass down lots of Greek customs, as he considered himself an American first and foremost. Pam copied this, too, wanting to be like her parents, though Jesse was a bit more interested in Greek things. However, Pam loved spending time with Papouli and Gina, anyway. They had been watching her since she was a baby, till she was a preteen. Pam enjoyed writing, an ability she passed down to D.J., or just playing with neighborhood kids like all three girls enjoyed, too; she had many pursuits for when her parents did argue a lot. She tried to help when this happened, while Jesse stirred things up, trying to play them off each other to get what he wanted. The siblings, as some are at times, were simply very different in that regard.

Papouli's early influence shaped Pam quite a bit – it may not have shaped her when it came to customs, but it did when it came to a great love for life and family.

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[6] Hence Joey's love of Detroit sports teams - the actor often wears Red Wings and Tigers replica jerseys, and since he had a choice the character was meant to, also. Military families move a lot at times but they lived in Detroit when he formed his bond with favorite sports teams.

[7] On TV, later facts are almost always canon, as characters are established more. Here, Danny told Rusty in "Terror In Tanner Town" his parents were divorced, probably around Rusty's age because he understands what Rusty's going through as a kid. He clearly had a dad as a teen in the story he told in "Ol' Brown Eyes," also 4th season. D.J. referred to him as Grandpa, though he could be deceased and she simply knew him when he was living. His mom mentions a divorce in "Granny Tanny."

She could have had two divorces, but likely didn't want to mention one reason she was unattached was she was a widow. The memory would make her sadder. She wouldn't bring up a 20-year-old divorce unless it was to avoid mentioning something else; almost no woman divorced over 20 years earlier would mention that she was. And yet, if it was a more recent divorce, she wouldn't add her kids were grown, because she wouldn't have had to raise her kids while divorced.

A much less likely approach is that she moved and the dad had custody of the children in San Francisco. Fathers almost never got custody in those days, and there was almost never joint custody. It seems like Danny's mom was always there, so a divorce elsewhere and remarriage is what happened.

[8] "Pal Joey"

[9] "Mad Money" - logic that fits Danny well and explains the different dates. Joey's parents must have divorced after the move, else why would Mindy move too, but very soon after, as his dad says in "Viva Las Joey" he stuck around a while. Something, likely Joey's trouble in a new school and his dad's reaction, was the last straw once they moved there. Mindy almost moves with Joey months later, his dad stays a couple years, then it's almost 20 years since they speak, as noted in late 1990 "Viva Las Joey."

II. TANNER COURTSHIP - BAY SIDE STORY

1. Meetings and Impressions - Late August, 1972

Danny:

I wasn't looking for love that first day of tenth grade. I was thinking about how nice and orderly shapes were with their beautifully symmetrical patterns.

Then, she walked in and sat. Her blonde hair sparkled in the sunlight. Her eyes were the most beautiful blue I could have imagined. People worried I'd challenge Strom Thurmond's filibustering record if I were elected to Student Council; I even distracted opponents by talking while wrestling. But, here, I was speechless.

Finally, I squeaked out a request for a slide rule. Once she handed it to me, I managed to spout, "Danny Tanner. That is, that's my name. I wasn't calling you Danny; that would be silly."

I found another thing to fall in love with then - her laugh. It was a delightful, innocent, fun-loving giggle that said she appreciated me, even if I had just made a fool of myself. Yes, even when I did a second later. She introduced herself, and I said nervously, "Wow, your name sounds like it should be in a spelling bee."

"I'll spell it for you later," she said with a chuckle, shushing me as the teacher was trying to get our attention. I didn't mind that - I liked a girl who followed the rules. In fact, my greatest love in grade school was being the hall monitor.

I'd had crushes before, of course. My best friend Joey and I each liked the same girl, Barbra Anne, last year. She got tired of us feuding over her. We called years later to ask about it. She told us she just pretended to like both of us to make Jesse jealous.[10] Of course, he was years younger, but when we told Stephanie, she told us the rest of the story. This lady had a niece in the Honeybees with Stephanie. The girls had talked, and, this woman learned we were raising my girls together. So, when Joey and I called, she used that to hint that she didn't want to be bothered. It was pretty clever.

Joey:

Danny can get way off track. Let me get us back. We met after school on the basketball court, though he had no time to play. Thanks to Pam, our one-on-ones were history. We'd play on teams, but not individual one-on-one, after late July, 1972.[11]

He asked me to quiz him on a word. I thought it was the city where catsup was first made. He answered, "It's the name of the most fabulous girl in the world," then said what Pam told him about how some bureaucrat changed their spelling when they came.

Pam was new in the school, in 9th grade. Elementary schools went from Kindergarten through 8th back then where we lived; they changed to K-6th with Junior High in 7th and 8th in 1974, just before Jesse got there. Pam was bright enough to take a 10th grade math class. This was before advanced placement courses in our school, so she moved up a grade in one subject. Unfortunately, Nick pushed Jesse the same way.

Jesse:

I already disliked school by this time. And, you know why? It wasn't because I was really struggling yet. It was because my father pushed me so hard.

See, here's what happened. I should have been 18 and graduating in June of 1981,

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[10] "The Heartbreak Kid," Honeybee connection lets her know & evade nicely.

[11] "Pal Joey" says they last played July 29, 1972, and implies one-on-one, not with others.

because my birthdate was April of 1963.[12] Well, my dad saw Pam doing really well early in elementary school being born in late fall. So, guess what? He tells himself, "Pam will be 16 when she starts her senior year, and only 17 when she graduates. Jesse can do the same thing. He's got to have the same tenacious spirit I did." Having Danny around later probably made it worse. He was past our December first cutoff date,[13] but bright enough in '67 he tested at a 5th grade level before coming out here. They had him skip from 3rd to 5th for the '67-68 school year, so he and Joey wound up in 5th together.

Anyway, Dad pushed me right past second grade into third. It was just like when he pushed me so hard in Little League I ended up quitting.[14]

Well, okay, there's another reason. I have to admit, part of it was because I was such a jerk back then. I started fighting a lot in Kindergarten and first.[15] So, Dad told the principal, "This will cure Jesse of his fighting. Suddenly he won't be bigger than most kids in his class, he'll be smaller." Well, what Pop didn't comprehend was, I could never hurt smaller kids anyway, so it didn't affect my fighting at all.

See, I always had a soft side. I just didn't want to admit it. Part of it was Dad's and some of Papouli's stories about growing up in Greece, the terrible war over there, and how it affected the kids. Also, my dad took me to the Salvation Army to feed the needy one year for Christmas.[16]

Fighting is never right no matter what size the kid is. I know that now. I'm just saying that was my attitude back then. Moving me up didn't cure it. By the time my sister met Danny, I was a real rebel. My dad didn't understand they had a December first cutoff date for a reason. I was nine and four months. Pam was a few months shy of fifteen.

Pam:

I liked Danny right away. He was so honest, so outgoing, even when sounding goofy like with the spelling bee comment. I could tell he was anxious, so while I didn't ask him out, I gave him an opening by offering to talk later. After class, I handed him a paper with my name on it, and we conversed a little.

I loved how he wore his heart on his sleeve, but in a positive way, not like Dad. He was just so happy about things, and loved to hug.

That's the way I liked to be. I always said, "Smiles are free, so give them away."[17] I was a lot like my Greek grandparents in that way. I tried to influence Jesse to do the same. He was already more willing to listen to me than he was to our parents. Of course, that didn't mean much sometimes, with how he hated rules.

Don't get me wrong, I wasn't perfect. I'd do little things like stick carrots up Jesse's nose; and believe me, it wasn't to discipline him, though it became like that. I was good overall, but I knew God expected perfection, and gave Himself because I couldn't be perfect on my own, though I tried to be since I wanted to be the best.

I received Jesus Christ as my Savior by pure faith at the age of nine. My friend Judy invited me to her church in first grade, and I kept going with her family. Mom and Dad weren't involved in a church, especially not Greek Orthodox because they speak

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[12] "I'm There For You, Babe," he turns 26 in April, 1989
[13] "The Big Three-O," sstill cutoff date in the '80s and '90s in California, which they used on the show
[14] "Wrong Way Tanner"
[15] "A Pinch For A Pinch"
[16] "A Very Tanner Christmas"
[17] "Goodbye, Mr. Bear"

Greek sometimes there and Dad was determined to always speak English.

I could have received that gift at home, I just happened to be in a church. I truly accepted His death and resurrection were for me; He had me on His mind when He went to the cross, as well as every other person ever. So, I repented - agreed with God that my sin kept me from entering Heaven and I needed Him to save me – and trusted Him to do it. Once I did that, He changed me on the inside so I could go to His perfect Heaven.

Danny professed that, too, but he always seemed more interested in cleaning. He was nuts about that, the only teenage boy I ever heard of who spent much of his spare time doing it. I didn't mind, though. I wrote in my diary that if he was the one for me, I'd be way ahead, because he'd be willing to do chores most men wouldn't.

Danny - Sept. 9, 1972:

I met Pam's parents today. They seemed really nice. They didn't mind I was basically a year older than Pam.[18] They could tell I always wanted to do the right thing. I came in to pick Pam up, and she was in the bathroom and running late. So, I dusted a little for them.

Jesse, of course, was a loudmouth. I'd heard stories about how he was always getting sent to the principal. Kids talked, and you learned pretty fast who the problems were, the ones you stayed away from. Jesse wasn't the type who would pick on little kids and take their lunch money, or join a gang later - Pam made sure of that as much as Nick and Irene. But, he was the type who would pick fights just to show who was tougher.

I was concerned for Jesse - he didn't seem to have any direction in life, and his main purpose - other than loving Elvis and keeping his hair perfect - was to goof off.

Pam:

Danny tried to persuade Jesse not to be such a rebel. He really wanted to get through to him. For instance, once, early in our relationship, he asked why Jesse picked fights if that would mess up his hair. Jesse quickly retorted, "I perfected the movie technique of fighting while keeping your hair perfect."

After a while, Danny gave up trying to get through to him. It wasn't that Danny deemed him hopeless. He merely knew something special would be needed to alter him. Only snippets of it showed in Jesse even after we began raising a family. Sensing those snippets showed what a great judge of character Danny could be.

Joey:

Pam had a special way of dealing with Jesse. She was quite clever at tricking him. She would stick carrots up his nose if he was really wild later, though that started out as just her being playful. Jesse eventually thought the "carrot and stick approach" meant if you didn't stick to your word, you got carrots up your nose.

Pam was always there for Jesse when he did wrong. She was usually the first one he'd confess to if he'd done something bad. She would almost always be there to calmly talk to him after Nick had screamed his head off.

Pam:

Dad had a temper. It never affected me, though. For one thing, I was always quite

[18] "Prom Night"

well behaved. Also, in my formative years Mom and Dad still tried not to argue in front of us, or at least not to leave the room mad. The problem was, after years of complaining, if either wouldn‘t budge or even talk, things built up so it was impossible to hold it in till we weren‘t around. And, usually, it was Dad who wouldn’t budge. He could be stubborn, too, like Jesse.

As Jesse continued to get wilder, he agitated Dad more. Dad therefore got angrier, and less willing to give Jesse slack. By this time I was a teen, and hanging out with friends or Danny. But, Dad’s temper affected Jesse, and he rebelled more.[19]

Thankfully, Dad would never hit - that was carved in stone, then the stone placed in a special oven and hardened to the strength of titanium. He told me once he realized what he could do if he was too angry, and so stuck to using his words. After all, he’d lived with conquerors and rebels in Greece who hit with bullets when angry.

Danny:

I knew Nick didn’t have the best situation, growing up with filthy invaders and such. He’d overcome that very well, all things considered.

I disliked that anger, but there were positive aspects to Nick. He never drank - he knew from Papouli’s stern warnings and stories that drinking could make him too angry to remember how to control himself. He never hit. And, he always calmed down eventually. That’s something Pam and I both tried to stress to Jesse. We got through to him a little. But, there were still things he rebelled against her on, too. He knew she’d always love him, no matter what, though.

That’s the kind of thing Pam and I wanted in our lives, in our children - we wanted to encourage that unconditional love. It’s what Jesse wanted, too, when it came right down to it. He just wanted to do his own thing all the time.

Jesse:

Sometimes I wonder if I would have turned out differently if my dad had been calmer. I want to say yes, but I have to be honest. I didn’t rebel because of my dad. I rebelled because I wanted to be tough. I wanted my own way with everything, though I ended up a bit like him in some ways.

When he started to get upset, that made me rebel even more. I was a pretty big rebel by the time he started to scream a lot, though. His first real screaming fit, I think I was about ten or eleven, and Danny and Pam were already dating. I’d done something really bad, and he was at the end of his rope. I really think he didn’t know what to do, so he just started shouting.

I walked out, and went over to Danny’s. I knew Pam would be there. I hung out with them for a while, till Dad called and said he was done. He’d just kept screaming for twenty minutes even though I’d left, so he could let off some steam.

From that time on, he’d sometimes just walk away if he simply wanted to yell. Still, he didn’t always do this, and that made me tune him out more. Mom and Dad were arguing more by this time, and I was just too good at playing them off each other. I’ve got to give Dad credit, though; he was determined enough never to walk out for good.

As much as I wanted to tune Pam out sometimes, I had to admit she was pretty

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[19] “Joey Gets Tough” - Jesse was grounded for most of the 1970s; also may be evidence for his parents never hitting, but grounding him instead

smart. She knew what life was about, and deep down, I wanted to do what she said. I acted like I didn't need that. But, would I ever be wrong!

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2. LOVE AND MARRIAGE - May, 1976

Danny:

Pam and I had gone together for almost four years. Seven years, three months, and - well, you don't need to know the days - since Joey and I met in 5th grade, we graduated in 1975. I took Pam to my prom in '75, and to hers the next year. We'd confided all our hopes, all our dreams, all our fears, all our joys. We were like a jigsaw puzzle where you know the two pieces fit.

Pam:

My senior prom was May 1, 1976. Ours were the first Saturday in May, so the Court got their picture into the back of the yearbook, and seniors could rest before the hectic pace of graduation. Plus, springtime was beautiful in San Francisco.

Danny and I were so excited! I felt like Cinderella, except my clock would never strike midnight - it hadn't even after going to Danny's prom. While Jesse was running around with all these girls, Danny and I merrily flew around the city like the two sweetest lovebirds you ever saw.

Unfortunately, we were too lovestruck. We were both determined to remain pure, and we did. However, we didn't want to wait any longer for marriage.

Joey:

Danny and Pam stunned me early that evening at a pre-prom dinner. "We're going to elope," Pam whispered excitedly.

Of course, I did the natural thing for me. I joked apologetically, "Sorry, but I'm not an ordained minister." Once Pam was done laughing, I asked if they were serious.

"Very - Joey, we've never been more certain about anything," Danny proclaimed.

I'd do anything for a friend. "Okay, so you want me to go with you?" They did. "How will we explain to our parents?"

"I've got it all set - your mom and our folks think we booked two motel rooms in my name. Which we did, just in Nevada. We get there, sleep in separate rooms before the wedding, then get married." I wavered. "Come on, Joey, you know how close we are."

"Joey, this is the perfect thing for Danny and I. I mean, we know each other inside and out. If we know we're getting married in a few years, why wait till then?" Pam asked, bouncing with excitement.

"Well…" A more mature friend would have asked about living arrangements, work, college, and so on. But, I preferred simple fun and honesty that comes with being a kid, or at least acing childlike. Besides, Pam's friend Judy asked her about those things, and she seemed satisfied. So I quickly agreed. I was Danny's witness, Judy was Pam's.

Danny – Still a little wild in college:

I had everything set - we'd been talking about this for weeks. As it would turn out, eloping would be the worst mistake we ever made.[20] Not because we didn't get

[20] "Luck Be A Lady 2"

along; we remained great friends till the day she died. We experienced money troubles that forced me to take a year longer in college, though. We didn't realize the challenge of raising a family. I was very organized, but that wasn't enough.

Also, I still had youthful lusts, and tried to impress young ladies in college; never anything big, just funny things like that I created the TV show "The Love Boat."[21] I felt bad right away every time I did it after we got married. But, trying to impress ladies was just my hormones. Pam was always very forgiving, though, and I always remained faithful. I never touched or kissed another woman once I met her. Impressing girls was just to make them notice me, and Joey and I knew some were too young, anyway.

Joey stuck by me in college. He looked at women with me just enough to keep me from going crazy. Then, if I went too far in thinking about one, he'd remind me Pam was waiting. What a guy! He knew just how much I could handle without going overboard. He might be a little nutty sometimes, but times like that demonstrate why it's important to have a special friend to help you, and to hold you accountable. And, why it's important to listen to that friend.

Pam:

We got to Nevada, and Joey joked about forgetting to get a ladder. He asked if there was a hardware store open at 3 AM. He kept us laughing that whole time.

Danny was such a romantic. Once we checked into the rooms, guys in one, ladies in another, he put a handkerchief over his eyes. "It's bad luck for me to see you the day of our wedding," he quipped.

I told him to wait till we found a good chapel. Then he could do that if he wanted. Even then, I don't think that superstition was ever used with eloping.

We slept in our prom outfits, having been able to get the rooms because Danny had money saved up from his allowance. We awakened to a beautiful sunrise. Danny commented that it was the perfect symbol for our marriage.

Danny:

We were young, inexperienced kids who felt there was nothing beyond the prom but marriage; the prom was our last "date" ever.[22] We'd needed time to be engaged, but we didn't think about that. We simply placed those rings on each other's fingers, walked out into the beautiful, fresh air, and shouted with glee.

Pam:

It was so exciting! I couldn't believe what I'd done - I kept shrieking, "I'm married, I'm married!" It's every little girl's dream, to meet that special someone who's going to sweep you off your feet - and in Danny's case, sweep everything else up, too. But, being kids still, only here did we recognize a major problem.

How would we tell our parents?

Danny:

I called Nick and Irene and told them to meet at my parents' house that afternoon.

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[21] "Under the Influence," Joey quickly reminding Jesse of Becky in "One Last Kiss" could also show he was used to helping Danny like that, too.

[22] "Danny's First Date"

They figured I'd announce our engagement - I had asked Nick's permission, and that would have been the smart thing to do, get engaged first.

However, I could never keep a secret very well. I was too nervous, too excited, or too stupid when Pam was on that pay phone telling my parents we had an announcement. I blurted out in the background, "We're married!"

Pam:

I was just as excited as Danny. I've always been that way. So, the shock of what Danny had blurted didn't hit me till after I copied, "Yes, I'm married!" Danny started to sweat, then took the phone and tried to talk to his mom while big blobs of perspiration came down my forehead. I realized I'd better tell my parents, too. So, I borrowed some money from Judy for my own long distance call. It was the craziest scene - we must have looked like buffoons in wrinkled prom outfits at that pay phone along the highway, with very little for miles around. But, that's what being young and in love does sometimes.

Danny:

Once we got my folks calmed down a little, we called Nick and Irene back, and told them the truth. I could hear Nick - "Is this what you really want?" "With all my heart," Pam exclaimed. Irene asked, "Are you sure you're not doing this because you have to?" We both assured her that we hadn't slept together, which was true.

Nick thanked me for at least having the guts to call back. I sensed lots of emotion, but he just went out and did a primal scream, so he was calm by the time we got back. He would have preferred hearing in person. However, once my mom knew, he could see why we'd called back. Both of them were still upset, of course. Jesse was still sleeping, and he'd be the toughest one to tell.

Jesse:

I was shocked when they got home and told me - I didn't know what to do. So I tried to wrestle Danny and get him in a headlock. He was pretty good, he'd been on the wrestling team. My efforts looked more like street fighting or ice hockey, I wasn't sure which, and he accidentally broke a rib.[23]

The crazy thing was, I couldn't explain why I was so upset. I loved the guy. I knew they'd be happy together. And, having Pam out of there meant I didn't have to worry about her bossing me around. I guess it was how I always turned to her for stuff, even though I didn't like to turn to anyone, really. It was the same way with women, I figured I'd be the one to find a girlfriend, I'd make one fall in love with me, and, well, I wasn't even close to thinking about the future and marriage yet. I wouldn't have those thoughts till after she died, sadly, so she never could help me with that here.

I can't help but imagine her asking God for a girlfriend for me up in Heaven, though. There's little things I see in Becky, like the way she gets when she's trying to make me see a point, that seem so much like Pam, I can't help but think at times that Pam sent her to me. But, that's getting way, way ahead of ourselves.

In the end, knowing I had to accept it, I got up and tried to dust myself off. The problem was, Danny's such a neat freak he dusted me off for me. Finally, I walked over to Pam. Sighing, I put my hands in my pockets and mumbled, "Congratulations, Sis.

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[23] "Luck Be A Lady 2"

You're gonna make a great mom."

Then, I just kept doing my own thing. It didn't matter what my dad said. I didn't know where to go from here. But, I would find out less than a week later.

Pam:

Danny and Joey roomed together in a freshman dorm at San Francisco State.[24] We finally agreed to move in with Danny's parents and younger sister, and try to find an apartment close to campus. There would be less commotion than at my house. Besides, Danny insisted that the woman is supposed to leave her home.

I have to admit, as we started moving my stuff, I didn't know what I was getting into, especially thinking about an apartment later. Still, Danny's parents promised we could stay as long as we needed.

In fact, she'd heard rumors that her job might transfer up to Tacoma. Her second husband - Danny called him "Dad," he was far closer to him - could always get part-time work, though he was kind of weak. Danny confided that he threw like a girl, though he'd told everyone else his dad hurt his arm in the war.[25]

Danny - Danny's siblings:

My mom and biological dad divorced in 1965; he'd worked really long hours and was almost never home. She met the man I called Dad six months later. In the summer of 1967, they married and we came to San Francisco, though with no flowers in our hair. My oldest brother and oldest sister stayed behind so she could attend her last year of high school. She eventually moved to Baltimore, married, and had one child, Steve.[26] We had a large family, but except for Wendy all wound up in the eastern U.S.. Once Wendy moved out, we only really saw each other at Tanner family reunions.[27]

I kept that conservatism and work ethic from when we'd lived in New England. I loved wearing a tie, often even at home. I guess my biological dad rubbed off on meI always hugged like crazy, I loved doing it. In that way I was more suited to California.

I went overboard the other way at times in devotion to my family, though, just to make sure I wasn't like my first dad. My early experience caused me to want to be too involved and controlling at times. The man I consider "Dad" was wonderful, though, and very involved in my life. He was a great guy.

Joey:

When Danny moved out, he also said he was taking fewer courses in the fall, as he had extra financial responsibility and needed to work. That was fine, as I needed to cut back, too - my financial situation was always worse than his, since my mom had never remarried. I didn't take a full load of courses till my sophomore year, in 1977-'78. Danny had taken more courses, but took the spring of '77 off for reasons that will soon be apparent. Actually, the reasons aren't the only ones. Get it - "a parent?"

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[24] The broadcasting program and Danny having a show on the college TV station in "Star Search" fits this school best, as do other things. They could have had a hockey team once. They were said to be roommates in one book but not for how long. In "Fraternity Reunion" and in books the school is near their home.

[25] "Ol' Brown Eyes" – after the divorce mentioned in "Terror in Tanner Town." It's unlikely divorcees would go to the same place. Hence, his dad as a teen was different from the man his mom divorced.

[26] "Just One of the Guys," cousin Steve is from that marriage.

[27] "Our Very First Christmas Show" and "The King and I" each mention such reunions.

That was fine, though - I was having lots of fun, and didn't mind having to stretch my college education out another year. I'd met a great girl, and I had other interests.

Danny:

I thought Joey was crazy when he talked about taking flying lessons. Not only did it take away from his college funds - he could have gone full time those first two years if he'd wanted, he just blew money sometimes - but I actually came right out and said, "Joey, you know Peter Pan never used an airplane."

He was serious, though, and did a good job, he didn't do anything foolish while in the cockpit. I never rode with him, but Pam and I were glad he had something fun to occupy him. He'd always wanted to be part of a big family, but his constant moving, as a military kid, not only prevented this, but also turned him into a grade A clown.

Part of the reason he acted like he did was so he could hide his sadness at not having the carefree, fun-loving childhood that I'd had. His dad was far too tough for the kind of person Joey was; relationships involve trying to relate to the other person, and his dad didn't do that.

Nick could be unbending, too, but he often tried to understand Jesse, though not always. I felt bad for Jesse - I wanted him to have a good relationship with his dad, and I tried to encourage them to talk. But, they each had a stubborn streak. So, while we were moving Pam in with me, Jesse was off sneaking around.

Jesse:

I didn't really want to deal with Pam's moving. I had my own plans, anyway - I'd planned this for weeks. I snuck into the Smash Club, just for kicks, that Friday night; you had to be twenty-one to get in when the previous owner owned it.

When I got there, I fell in love with the music. I knew I wanted to play music from then on.[28] Seeing Elvis for the first time was great, then seeing him live when I was eight or nine,[29] but this really drove it home.

Little did I know at the same time, my other life goal would start to form, too. You see, that night a little bundle of joy was conceived. And, nine months later, Pam Tanner became that great mom I always knew she'd be.

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[28] "Smash Club: The Next Generation"

[29] "Viva Las Joey" - the description is clearly of seeing him live on stage in Vegas, whereas in "The First Day of School" he only mentions having seen him on TV. The feel of seeing someone or something live is much different from merely on TV, with the only TVs from the 1960s. While we're not told, Jesse probably saw him in black and white, then, as there weren't many color TVs, which would add to the different feel.

III: THE COLLEGE YEARS: IT'S NOT FARRAH!

1. My Girl - May 1976-Feb. 1977

Danny:

Joey and I had considered joining a fraternity. Even before eloping, I investigated which ones I'd fit into. I was too bent on the straight and narrow to get into any wild behavior. Rules were meant so we could have fun within them, and partying and getting blasted is never good fun. Joey and I were on the same wavelength, but he had his own reasons. He was too much of a kid to party like that. He also made a good point about how one could only enjoy memories if one remembered them.

We found a group that didn't drink or do other wild, dumb stuff. They were like those clubs boys form in grade school where half the time is spent talking about how boys rule and girls drool. We also acted crazy when we'd watch sports together. Most of our guys played college sports, like Joey did hockey. So, our bonding was through incessantly screaming at each other to succeed, on varsity and intramural fields.

Joey and I did lots of stuff together even without rooming together. Pam and I found a place just off campus. It cut into our planned budget, as it cost a little more, but we decided it was better than living at my mom's. I figured I could just have fun. Pam's announcement in early August changed that, though.

Pam - Aug. 9, 1976:

I'd seen some little signs, but didn't want to think about it. I mean, I wasn't quite eighteen. I couldn't help but wonder, though. So, I finally went to the doctor. And, he confirmed it - I was pregnant.

Danny and Joey were playing a rare game of basketball with a few other guys, on an outside court. They used to play one-on-one all the time before Danny met me.

I excitedly drove to the college and got into their game to burn off excess energy. I joined Danny's team, and another guy joined Joey's. I quipped to the other team, "Better send in two so it's even." Then, I looked to see if Danny would respond.

Danny caught a pass. "It's even now," he said as someone fought him for the ball and stole it. "You don't want them to be up a man. It wouldn't be fair."

"Danny," I exclaimed while reaching and failing to knock a pass away. "I told you they'd need two to make it even."

"Come on, honey, even if you were Dr. J…oof." He fell down while trying to block a shot. It bounced around and in. "If you were Dr. J. the numbers would still be the same," he said as he got up for the inbound pass.

I threw up my hands, sounding a little like Jesse. "Hey, I'm playin' for two."

A couple other guys seemed to catch on, but it took Danny a moment. He grabbed the ball and looked for an open man. "Honey, that's ridiculous. The only way you could be playing for two is if you…what!" Joey swiped the ball from him and shot it as a look of shock dawned on Danny's face. "You mean you're… you're pregnant?" I nodded. "Honey, this is great!" He picked me up and twirled me around as the other guys started cheering. Danny gazed into my eyes and spouted, "I'm gonna be a father!" He hugged everyone and said that for the next three hours. As he seemingly embraced the whole city, I told my parents the good news.

Jesse:

I longed for them to have a boy. See, Pop was already talking about who would take over the family business someday. He only had Pam and me. But, if Pam could produce a grandson for him, then he'd be able to wait twenty more years for that kid to grow up and inherit the extermination business. He'd only be in his middle fifties, and he figured it would take me that long to settle down, anyway.

Pam:

All at once, Danny started doing odd jobs everywhere, just as he'd done in the spring semester before we eloped; his load last semester and this fall semester would equal one actual semester's worth of courses.

He knew we needed to save for a house. He'd gotten money from his birth dad every month, which he'd been saving. But, now he'd need to dip into that fund just to pay the costs of the baby's first years. His mom could help a little if she got this transfer and sold the house here; she could even sell it to us. But, our resources were going to be stretched to the max. I wanted my husband to be home some, too.

Joey – More On Why Not Much Greek Stuff:

I was immediately tabbed as the designated babysitter. I was also the sounding board for room decorations, even before anyone knew the gender - back then, you didn't get that detailed an exam unless there were health questions.

I also assisted with names. Pam didn't feel Greek. Nick was too Americanized. Papouli and Gina had influenced her, but once they left, any Greek cooking or other cultural symbols slowly disappeared.

Papouli's wisdom and zest for life remained, of course. That was the important part, not outside routines. Lots of immigrants find their children not engaging in as many outward customs from the "old country" - they want to be proud of their new home. I mean, look at Mork and Mindy a few years later. Robin Williams' character was always trying to be more like an Earthling, and their baby knew very little about the planet Ork.

Besides, Papouli was more the immigrant when they came, as Nick had still been rather young. Plus, acting too Greek reminded Nick of those painful war years. I told him to try watching cartoons and playing with puppets so he could have a normal childhood as an adult, but he refused.

Instead of going Greek, Pam mulled over names of famous performers of the day. I liked Dolly. That was the name of the girl in Bil Keane's "Family Circus" comic strip; with my love of cartoons it was a natural. Dolly Parton wasn't famous yet, but there was Dolly Madison, first lady and famous name in cupcakes. So, when Pam started spouting names in entertainment, I said sure, go with Dolly. Comics are very entertaining.

I really wasn't comfortable with what they decided, though.

Pam:

In November, Danny and I made our choices. Farrah Margaret Tanner would be her name, if it was a girl. Farrah Fawcett was a very popular actress then, and Margaret was my maternal grandmother's name. I felt a special person in one's life should get that middle name. My best friend Judy's name merited some thought later.

Joey loved to point out the wonderful irony of my grandmothers having the same names as the girls in the Dennis the Menace comic strip. However, Dad's parents had

moved back to Greece, and I hadn't seen them since, though we'd written. I was much closer to Mom's mom. And, even if they'd both been here, adding another comic name didn't appeal to me – Dolly Tanner just didn't sound right. We considered Margaret Judith Tanner. But, Margaret sounded old, while Farrah sounded fresh and unique.

Danny would be happy with any of my choices, as he had his own worries

Danny:

Mom had worked in a national stationery supply company for years, first in Connecticut, then out here. During Thanksgiving dinner, she announced she was being transferred to Tacoma, where Dad could also find part time roofing work.

It was a logical move. I was out and married. Wendy wanted to go to Africa. And, our older siblings were gone. Mom said we could have the house, but Pam and I had our sights set on some nice, big Victorian homes. So, once Wendy moved out after her 1977 graduation, they would sell the house. We'd each get some proceeds.

Pam and I might have enough for a down payment in a year or two, without the baby. With the baby - well, we'd still be able to save a little.

Pam – Never liked terms "step" and "half":

Danny's family lived in Connecticut till he was nine. That's how he kept his conservative streak, even though the San Francisco area was so liberal.

His second dad was great. We hated the terms "step-" and "half-," if a person acts like a father and you think of him that way, he's your father emotionally, whether adopted, biological, or hardly related. I knew people who looked up to cousins or friends' dads as most like fathers. And, in a way, Joey considered Danny to be like a brother.

Joey:

Danny's oldest brother was closer than the others to his biological dad. The man had allowed he and Danny's oldest sister to move back into that Connecticut home with him so she could finish high school there. That brother became a lawyer, too, and got the family house when their biological dad moved south to retire in 1990. He then gave their mom what's called a "life estate" to come back to her roots and live in it.[30]

Having lived through a divorce, it was even more imperative, in Danny's mind, to stick together. In a way, he had the same dedication Nick had; it's just he showed it in different ways. Cleaning, for example. His mom was wild about it, and he copied.

Pam:

Danny may have cleaned like crazy, in part, because of the tension he'd felt before the divorce. But, a big chunk of it was that he needed something to occupy him. He loved it. I teased him that if he hadn't taken the spring semester off to help me and to work because of the new baby, he would have taken it off just to clean.

It surprised me that he didn't want to get a dog, then; he'd have more to clean. However, he didn't like messes at all. I'd had a black lab that Jesse never liked, though I caught him petting and talking to it a few times. Okay, some of that was complaining

[30] At least one book, "Dear Michelle: How Will Santa Find Me?", says Danny is from Connecticut. It adds that the girls stayed in Danny's old room. This explains the conservative look and actions in San Fran, plus where Claire Tanner went and where older sibling stayed, on the East Coast.

about the dog, even though it was perfectly trained, but even so, I don't think he minded it as much as he claimed. It had died by this time, though. The dog was already about four years old when I got him from a friend whose baby brother was allergic.[31]

Someone once asked me if I thought Danny had a psychological obsession with cleaning. I didn't think so; his zest for cleaning never interfered with his daily routine. I knew some form of traumatic stress might increase his love for it, but I couldn't see it interfering with anything.[32]

When the time came to go to the hospital, Danny had everything planned like usual. He was always a stickler for details. I helped keep him from planning too much, of course. But, I often worried, if I wasn't there, would he go way overboard?

Danny:

I did everything to make this marriage last, and so did Pam. We had various things we needed to talk about - as usual, I avoided the subjects. But, as we grew closer over the next few years, we would find we had so much common ground, it was incredible. And, when we didn't have it, we often laughed it off quite well.

Pam - 2/8 & 2/9/77:

I went into the hospital Tuesday, the 8th. Now, came the most difficult task of all. According to Danny, I was doing the equivalent of pushing a bowling ball out one of my nostrils. That might have been funny if I wasn't doubled over in pain when he said that.

Finally, early on the morning of the 9th, she came. A beautiful baby girl. Danny, half dead from not getting any sleep, suddenly began belting out the song, "My Girl" for all to hear. He would sing this to her often.[33] However, the matter of naming remained.

Joey - 2/9/77:

I was still dead set against Farrah. I'd accepted they didn't like the name Dolly, but they still wanted something unique. So, when I came in to visit, I cried at the fabulous sight, then used pretty much every typical hyphenated name you could imagine. Billie Bob, Peggy Sue, Billie Jean (a famous tennis player), and so on. I even combined some in strange ways, like Mindy Pam, my mom and Danny's wife.

Pam:

Ironically, a few years later, Margaret Thatcher's popularity in Britain might have induced us to go with Margaret as a first name in spite of ourselves. Papouli idolized how Winston Churchill kept British spirits up early in the war. So, I had a thing for their more outspoken Prime Ministers. However, I didn't feel Margaret was viable in 1977.

Once we settled Joey down, we did some serious thinking. We all liked Donna Jo, or D.J. for short. So, our little girl wound up as Donna Jo Margaret Tanner. Despite what D.J. thinks, though, she never would have been Farrah Jo, just Farrah Margaret.

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[31] "Welcome To My Zoo," a book where Jesse claims to have had this dog. Michelle would know he normally didn't like dogs, though, so from her point of view would overlook any sarcasm in his remark about it being a "good friend." It was likely Pam's, and Jesse just said that to humor Michelle. Then again, he could have talked to it plenty after Nick had screamed at him, too.

[32] Which it didn't; it never interfered with activities like work. It is possible he had OCD tendencies, but if he did, he was a Columbo (always those little things) not a Monk (who has severe problems)

[33] "Ol' Brown Eyes"

Danny:

I had to hand it to Joey. He made some excellent points. For instance, if the actress embarrassed herself, the lack of any other person with that name could scar our daughter for life. Also, he said that the name might disappear so quickly, it was better to stick with very common names, which we would for our next two children.

I don't know if you can say a man is prophetic when he says "comics are timeless, so you can always name her after a comic strip character." But, at least even Joey knew "Olive Oyl" would have been a dumb name. We were glad we didn't use "Farrah" soon afterward. It was popular because of a TV show for a couple years, then nothing was ever heard of the name again; it wasn't even a small spike like with Shirley Temple. Jesse hated "Hermes," so who knew what she would have thought about being called "Farrsh." D.J. was very happy not to have been called that, but only because she was glad none of the kids at school ever had the chance to cry out "it's not Farrah!"

Joey was still really mature one minute, and really immature the next. We wanted to go on a trip to Palm Springs for Spring Break starting March 12th. Pam and I could get out with D.J. for a weekend, but also get by ourselves and let Joey watch her, thus keeping our own relationship solid and not making it only about the baby.

As it would turn out, it would be the first major test of how we would handle things after the "Honeymoon phase" of our marriage.

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2. Making It Through the Rain - March 1977-Jan. 1980

Danny - March 12, 1977 – First major crisis:

Joey drove us to Palm Springs, and guess what? His car broke down. I had $800 to my name, and that's how much it cost to get it fixed. Thankfully, we'd paid that month's rent, and bought groceries. But, now we were stranded in Palm Springs.

I had the most wonderful wife in the world, though; I didn't need to worry. Well, I did anyway, but I didn't need to worry.

Pam:

It was one of those reasons why eloping was such a horrible mistake in retrospect. I was all upset about how we were going to get home, for one thing. I wanted to be the best mother possible, and being down here with Danny and Joey just wasn't letting me do that. I felt like I was failing our little girl.

On the other hand, when Danny came to me and said he'd loaned Joey the $800,[34] while it disturbed me that we were now broke till his paycheck next Friday, I felt I had to support him. Sure, Joey could have called his mom and had her send some money via Western Union. But, Joey had been Danny's friend for so long, and that is the true sign of friendship - when you'll give everything for that friend.

I was upset, though, so I had Joey watch D.J. in the stroller at the mechanic's place. Danny and I went off to the side for a somewhat tense discussion about what we were going to do for rent money now. We lived paycheck to paycheck as it was, and then what if there was an emergency and one of us had to go to the hospital or something? Danny assuring me that he'd think of something just wasn't cutting it.

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[34] "Mad Money"

Through about ten minutes of talking and weeping - well, okay, I was doing most of the weeping - we decided on two things. First, that little place near campus was out. We had to start saving money, and that meant moving in with someone for a few months, along with praying someone would buy Danny's parents' home fast but be willing to wait to move in till after Wendy graduated, so we could get some money out of that.

But, where to move? Danny's parents couldn't pull the house off the market - Wendy had been promised some of the money to go to Africa. And, we certainly didn't have the money to buy it from them. Besides, if we moved in there, and it sold too fast, we wouldn't have the money to move again - we were looking at late summer to be sure we had enough.

On the other hand, my parents weren't the best ones to live with, either, Jesse wasn't any help, and it was so much more confusing. They'd be great for overnight stays, like when the girls stayed later. But, they weren't a good long term solution, even for only half a year or so. We didn't want them arguing all the time in front of D.J. – though as we realized later they would have toned it down a lot with kids in the room. They did later, that's why the girls spent as much time there as they did.

I could see why some couples split up over financial problems. We never would, though - we were committed to staying together and working things out. Marriage is a lifelong commitment, and we just had faith we could make it.

We might not have the house we wanted after a few years. We might not have the things we thought we would. We didn't even have privacy for a while. But, we had each other. We didn't know how, but we just remained committed to surviving those tough few years after the honeymoon was over. That's what couples need to realize - money is just a thing. It's people who are important, not what possessions you have.

Danny:

I felt badly that I'd had to loan Joey money, but he understood the situation. As Pam and I talked, we each kept saying in our minds, "We're going to get through this first major test." And, we did.

Pam reminded me that perhaps we should pray - she'd found a nice church already for us to attend. We wouldn't be as consistent later, especially me, but right now we both felt it was very important. Prayer is one of the wonderful advantages of having that relationship with Christ. And, sadly, it's one I hardly ever used.

After Pam prayed for us to find a way, Mindy Gladstone popped into our heads. She knew my mom well, since Joey and I were so close. I wondered - maybe we could move into her place.

I didn't know how to approach Joey about this, though - it's a lot tougher than volunteering your mom to bake cookies for the class.

Thankfully, he liked the idea. We still had a couple weeks till we had to move out. So, at least there would be time to convince her. It was better than when D.J. told Pam as she was getting on the school bus in third grade that she'd volunteered her to bake cookies that day.

You lose all privacy if you move in with in-laws. However, she wasn't quite an in-law. Also, it gave us another sitter for D.J. so we could go out ourselves for a date night. And, it wouldn't last too long. So, all in all, it was probably the best scenario.

Pam - 3/20/77:

Danny, Joey and I stopped by Joey's mom's place, and Danny and Joey suddenly acted like they were ten again.

"Mom, Danny and I, well, why don't you ask?"

"Joey, she's your mother."

"Yeah, but it's you and Pam and D.J.."

"Okay, look, we'll settle it this way, Joey. I'll say a word, then you say a word. We'll just keep going back and forth."

Mindy snickered. "Something tells me you boys aren't going to ask to camp out back tonight."

"Well, no, uh, you see Mom…"

"That's more than one word," Danny corrected Joey.

I started laughing as they debated the merits of words like "uh," and whether Joey had in fact started to ask with "you see."

"Did they do this all the time?"

"All the time, Pam."

"Oh, all right, I'll start," Danny finally relented. "Mrs."

By the time they finished, Mindy was more than happy to accept us for a few months.

Jesse - 3/26/77:

I was really glad to see Danny and Pam continuing to get along. I couldn't imagine how bad the fighting would get if my parents were in that position.

They moved in with Mindy a couple days later; she told my mom she felt just like another grandparent. My parents didn't mind, either. I knew just how to sell it; I asked each one if they thought the other might not be a bad influence.

My life was fun, too. I not only loved playing music, I was going to Greece once the school year was over. Dad thought it might inspire me to actually get good grades. I hadn't seen Papouli for years, but I still remembered him fondly.

Pam - 4/4/77 – On grandparents, etc.:

Once we settled in with Mindy, I felt kind of bad - I started to wonder if maybe my parents would have been better than I thought. After all, they did make great babysitters. They tried hard not to argue in front of D.J. just like they had when Jesse and I were younger. D.J. and Stephanie spent a couple nights there a few times later, and it was fine. They loved playing games and such with the girls.

However, in later years they liked to go to Palm Springs, so they weren't around as much.[35] Danny's mom also loved to travel after she moved back, since she was retired. So, they didn't spend as much time with our girls as some grandparents. D.J. and Stephanie were too busy with their own friends by the time Danny's mom moved back. His mom would have put much more effort into it if D.J. were trying to be like a mom, though, because she'd want to assist in that endeavor, and grow closer to Michelle.

Anyway, I'd made a little extra money for us as a babysitter, too, and now Danny and I discussed me doing that more often for a while. Danny and Joey would be attending

[35] Nick and Irene are in Palm Springs in one episode, it's likely they travel a lot, especially after the first few seasons. Likewise, Michelle develops a bond with Danny's mom, more so in the Book Universe.

college full time starting next fall. Not having to pay rent helped - we really should have stayed with Danny's mom in the first place…no, then we would have had to move out when it sold, whereas now we could take our time. It was so confusing.

Danny and I longed to go to Greece with my family, but that cost a lot of money. I'd really enjoyed Papouli, and wanted Danny to meet him. But, as badly as we both wanted to go, we wisely resisted those desires. When the house sold, we used some money for a deposit on an apartment instead, slowly building up funds to buy a home.

Jesse - 7/26/77:

We went to Greece for a month. Pop said he needed to go back now that it was peaceful. He couldn't believe how much it had changed since he left, when it was still suffering from the effects of the wars. Years later, it was a great place to visit.

I loved Greece, and not just because Papouli took such good care of me. I met a girl named Elena. She was about my age, and she was fabulous. I gave her her first kiss; I'd kissed girls before, but it was very special to her. Then, we walked around the table, a Pompadoris custom dating back to the ancient Greeks. Basically, after that I was married by their traditions.

I laughed it off, though; she wasn't coming to America at her age, and I knew I wouldn't make it back for a long time, if ever. It was like the movie Grease. In fact, my buddies teased that I should get royalties. Which I might have, if Grease was set in Greece, but that's the kind of pun my boys would love years later, not me. I just enjoyed that special summer, and told her we'd still be friends. And, I wondered at times, what if?

Pam - 8/26/77:

I just couldn't stop teasing Jesse when he told everyone about getting married. Honestly, I don't think that would be legal in the United States. I think Jesse knew that, too. He dreamed of her, but he kept going around with his own girlfriends back here. He found lots of girls who wanted to hang around him.

Joey - 8/27/77:

Danny had made enough money working, with Pam babysitting for other college students, that he was able to come back to school full time this fall, though some of the sale proceeds from his parents helped. That meant we were both starting our sophomore years at the same time. Now, we could graduate together.

It meant I wouldn't be flying quite as much. Even to fly a small plane, a person has to log so many hours in the sky. My flight instructor was an ex-military pilot named James. The military hadn't changed him like it had my dad; my instructor left the service after World War Two, my dad had been in it for decades, starting in Korea. One of my instrctor's boys ended up marrying the woman who would be D.J.'s guidance counselor.

I made the college hockey team this fall, while Danny went back to broadcasting like he had earlier. I also said "I love you" to my girlfriend - of course, I did it as Fred Flintstone. But, that's just the way I've always been. I thought she could tell I loved her - and, in a way, I think she could. When we met years later, I learned the fellow she'd left me for had also been much more successful than I was.[36] Still, it worked out well

[36] "Blast From the Past"

Danny:

College would be a series of major highs and lows for Joey. He came within inches of a championship and trip to the national college hockey tournament.

I was on hand for the deciding game that winter, as Joey played against the best goaltender in the conference, one who would go on to a very successful pro career - he retired after two years in the minors with all his teeth still in place.

Pam - 12/1/78:

Joey always made me laugh with his comedy. He often said even if nobody else liked him, he could always count on my laughter brightening his mood. And, going to see him at various comedy clubs was a great stress release from a day of caring for D.J.; sometimes for two or three if I happened to have a babysitting job.

It was my turn to cheer Joey up after Binkley blocked several of his shots in the final minute to preserve the win. He took it really hard, considering all his family and friends were there; his mom and a raucous fraternity that made an incredible amount of noise. Binkley celebrated and taunted Joey a lot more than he should have.

I told Joey he was just like Charlie Brown here, a lovable loser that everybody appreciated and supported. He managed to crack a smile. Thinking of the line drives that got hit right past Charlie Brown, Joey finally raised his head, nodded slightly, and said, "Yeah. At least he didn't send the puck back at me so fast it made me do a flip and knocked all my clothes off. That would have been embarrassing, sitting out there on the ice in my underwear." He led off with that joke the next time he performed.

I could tell that if he had the chance, there was part of him that would love to turn the tables, though. On the other hand, he's so non-confrontational, I wondered if he would do it if he could.[37]

Danny - 3/18/79:

Joey never mentioned that game - when he'd use the Charlie Brown joke in his monologues, it would always be a random hockey game, not that one.

By the next season, several of our best players had graduated, so we were back to being mediocre. Binkley had graduated, too, to some bad minor league hockey team that struggled to draw any fans. That might explain why Binkley was so anxious to humiliate him again; his hockey career after that had been one of dismal failure.

Joey had a dream, too. He wanted to make people laugh all over the world. Well, okay, all over the country - it's hard to make people laugh when you don't speak their language. I helped him realize he needed to stick to what he did best - and he did. He began doing standup comedy full time later this year. Patty didn't appreciate him the way his friends did. She failed to realize anything was below that comical exterior.

But, I knew the right woman would come along, who wouldn't mind Joey's comedy and sometimes immaturity. She'd notice a wonderful, caring man. I'm glad we didn't know how long it would be; at our ages that really would have been frustrating.

Pam:

Joey devoted himself to comedy. He pledged that he'd give up comedy if not on the Tonight Show at some point in the next ten years. That sounded like a realistic goal at

[37] "Nice Guys Finish First"

the time, in our early twenties.[38] Still, I worried he might feel too much pressure and try too hard to be funny. I advised him to think about D.J.. Danny had shown a new picture on his college TV show that day.[39] I reminded him how Danny, D.J. and I just enjoyed having him around. It was fun just giving away smiles, because they're free.

I guess I got that from Papouli. Even if the saying was my own, that's the same attitude he had. Life has so many problems, it's a shame to let them weigh you down.

We'd had quite a few bumps our first years of marriage. But, things were looking up for all of us. We planned to go regularly to that small church we'd found – well, D.J. and I would, if not Danny. I felt it was important for our children to learn about faith. So did Danny, though I was more into it.[40] We talked more about the future. He was at last willing to think about what could happen if something happened to one of us.

Joey – Sept. 1, 1979 - On Pam's friends after her death:

Danny and Pam made final arrangements to go down to Los Angeles for a wedding. Judy and Pam would both be bride's maids.

The lady and her fiancé would have one son, Ian, a year older than Stephanie.[41] Pam and Judy had met the girl earlier, but really got to know her in high school. She'd be marrying her high school sweetheart. Comically, they went to rival schools, USC and UCLA. However, that simply taught them to laugh at little things and have fun more, just as Danny and Pam were so good at doing.

We saw Ian somewhat regularly once the couple moved back to the area. Still, unless you're really close, good friends don't even stay in touch with each other more than once in a while, once the job of raising children and having one's own life as a couple begins. That's something Danny and I were learning firsthand. It's one reason I was so devoted to comedy, and would soon make my ten year pledge. I loved being a kid at heart, but yet Danny and Pam were a couple, so I knew I couldn't be around them all the time. As an adult, I had to have my own thing, if you will. How ironic, then, that I'd be moving in with Danny years later.

After Pam died, of course, there was a bit of drifting apart because of sadness on friends' parts, too, who had known Pam. Plus, they were closer to Pam, not Danny. Still, such friends stayed in touch through cards and visited once in a while; just not a whole lot.[42] Being in the same area helps some, at least.

It was even harder for Judy. She couldn't get off from her job for the funeral; she

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[38] "Star Search"

[39] Clearly called a new picture, and she looks the right age, two, in "Star Search"

[40] Danny prays the blessing at Thanksgiving, so he's got faith. Stephanie prays to God (not to a saint) for Mr. Bear's return ("Goodbye, Mr. Bear."), Michelle prays "what'll I do?" when tempted to reveal Becky's party is a baby shower. Their church has a bake sale in "Just One of the Guys." In season 1 once, when something good happens Jesse looks up and says "See you in church Sunday." Jesse's also got what looks like a cross necklace. Books mention the girls praying at times, a few skip Sunday morning in a series of weekend events as if to imply they could be in church, and Steph and her friends plan a surprise in one book Sunday at 9 AM when almost nobody else is home. They're Protestants who go for Christmas and Easter, maybe a bit more, and are more dedicated in books.

Since the denomination is unknown, whether or not they were confirmed, and when baptized, isn't covered here, as that can be different with different denominations, so reader's choice on that. Salvation by grace through faith is the important part.

[41] "Hip Hop Till You Drop"

[42] At least, not in the one quarter of 1% of the time we see the Tanners, though the other 99% is open

was working in Atlanta. She'd married in 1985; Danny and Pam took the girls to the wedding. They had four kids. She wrote some, but the next time she came out after Pam died was her 25th year high school reunion in 2001. There's even less reason to make the effort to stay in touch with your friend's spouse and family with so much distance. Thankfully, some friends stay close to the surviving person; I would have tried with Pam and the girls. I think it's the right thing to do.

Pam:

We were a lot more confident by this time about leaving D.J. with Mom and Dad overnight; it wasn't a long trip. Two-year-olds can get pretty wild in a long car ride. However, when we flew to Atlanta, Danny and I took the girls. Judy had said they were invited, and was anxious to see them; she hadn't seen us for several years. We had a fun vacation in that area. We were starting to have enough money to afford longer trips, by 1985, and the girls could be occupied better. Steph loved being read to, but we also planned it so we'd all sleep for part of the flight, which helped a lot.

Danny - 12/28/79:

I tended to avoid problems if I couldn't control them. For instance, I liked to take each of the girls on special father-daughter trips. I tended to make every decision for D.J. early, even though Pam and I knew we needed to teach her to make choices. I was afraid it would scar her if she made the wrong one. Pam worried, too, at times, but eventually she convinced me to let them make a few. For instance, if we shopped for clothes, I told them what to try on, but they chose between the two or three things I selected.[43] I later let Michelle pick out her own preschool outfits at times, after all.[44]

I still managed to pick some things that were just too young for each girls' age, but this was one of those ways we learned not to make the same mistakes with Stephanie later. We were maturing as parents.

Joey – D.J.'s Pierced Ears, Handling Teen Problems:

This isn't to say they never made mistakes with Steph, but they did a lot better. Danny probably would have done a lot better with Pam by his side when it came to teenage issues, of course, but even there, he let D.J. get her ears pierced when she got to Junior High; the big problem there was that he just didn't realize that he had to treat each daughter differently.[45] D.J.'s might not have even come that early, but the dentist had been worried about one tooth that was a little crooked by that time; she needed a retainer, so Danny figured after a few months longer, since she was also wearing makeup, why not let her get them pierced, too.

Danny:

In late December, Pam and I sat alone in the living room, and started a budget for

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[43] "High Anxiety." Offering such a choice is much more likely. Pam would help earlier, and the girls had to learn to make good choices. By almost seven it would frustrate Michelle enough she'd consider it just him telling her what to try on, however, as that was part of it, even though technically she was choosing between two things; kids of 7 had a much broader range of thought than 3-year-olds..

[44] "Slumber Party," Michelle says she picked out the outfit.

[45] "I'm Not D.J." – It's uncertain when the actress who played D.J. had pierced ears, but here, storyline and what's said rules, not what's visual, as long as it's in character, which it is.

1980. Everything flowed naturally. We discussed the rent, what it might cost to be in our own home by the end of 1980, and so on. Then, it just came out - we needed to make wills. We agreed for right now, Pam's parents would be D.J.'s guardians if we both died; they were okay sitters, though one of Pam's friends was second and might be first later, in a few years. If something happened to one of us, the other could date again after a while. We were even finishing each other's sentences, it came so naturally.

We even felt the same concern for Jesse - if it became necessary, and he didn't bring any rough elements into our lives, we'd let him live with us if need be. He lacked direction, and couldn't even be convinced to improve his grades for a sport. Some sports he knew almost nothing about, in fact - enough basketball just to get by, and soccer to coach D.J.'s team with her help.[46] We allowed him on our hockey team out of sympathy once, and told him to skate around, though he wasn't too bad.[47] Of course, he couldn't skate really well even then.[48]

Pam:

All things considered, we agreed on pretty much, and talked out what we didn't. We had begun to work out a plan, and we were learning that if things didn't happen within that plan, it wasn't the end of the world. We were going to make it.

That was our entire philosophy going into marriage, of course; it was supposed to be forever. I think we were overwhelmed those first couple years with how many choices and how many struggles there were; that's why a period of engagement is so important. That's when you talk about those things, and make those decisions. Thankfully, at least we had the foundation of knowing that it should never be just something you try.

I was afraid we'd sent the wrong message to Jesse, but thankfully, as I watched from Heaven, things turned out perfectly for him, just as I'd dreamed they would.

Another of those really hard times that young married couples never expect had happened to us that Christmas, 1978. And then, we never would have expected what happened as we prepared for Joey's and Danny's college graduations.

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3. A Christmas to Remember

Pam - Dec. 23, 1978:

Danny had gone to cover a bowl game with a sportscasting crew where he interned. Unfortunately, it wasn't the Rose Bowl. It was a game played a couple days before Christmas! They could have gone to the newest bowl, the Holiday in San Diego, a day earlier, but there were several games played on the 23rd, and a few guys at the station were from Texas. So, they changed their plans away from the Holiday Bowl once the University of Texas got invited to El Paso, and went that day.

This was not the best planning. He'd be back late on the 24th, but I was

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[46] "I'm There For You, Babe"

[47] "Sisters In Crime"

[48] "Nice Guys Finish First," just consider it a joke by your "pen pal," as with his not recognizing Kareem Abdul Jabbar in "Air Jesse"; the real Jesse could skate some, as in the previously mentioned episode. An inner ear infection would affect balance, and with other sports he's let minor skills deteriorate, but the joke part is most likely as it wouldn't hurt him that much, and he would still know something about hockey. On the other hand, he could still have played hockey in the previous episode without being well versed enough to announce it. So, when he did skate in that one, he was just surviving on very little talent.

miserable, missing him and with a toddler who looked like a connect the dots book. Poor little D.J. had chicken pox. At least he'd been home when she'd had the mumps earlier.

We were in a poorer section of the region, right in San Francisco near the college, so she was exposed to a few more things than I would have liked her to be as a baby and toddler; she got them before the age when they immunize children.[49]

Danny had called just after lunch, lifting my spirit's a little. We must have said "I love you" ten times. I could tell it bothered him to be away, but he was right; someone had to earn some money, and he was earning a little something, as well as gaining lots of good experience. On the other hand, we'd married young so we could be together the rest of our lives. It was so confusing. We knew we were in this for the long haul, though - we'd make it through no matter what.

At least Mindy had had chicken pox. Joey claimed to be immune - something I'd expect more from Jesse. Jesse claimed he'd had it, when in fact his was an allergic reaction to wool,[50] something that was more pronounced in him than any others, though D.J. and later his kids would have slight reactions after extended exposure to something like an animal. I'd had chicken pox in 1962, months before he was born.

To further confuse things, Joey knew he'd had measles and not chicken pox, he only joked about being immune. However, Mindy told me Colonel Gladstone swore Joey had had chicken pox. [51] Can you tell he didn't serve in a M*A*S*H unit? Mindy said it wasn't just being too militaristic in the home that caused marital problems. When he said something was chicken pox, it was. It didn't pay to try to correct him. At least he'd stayed with him for once then, and even taught him his Popeye laugh.

Danny gone and D.J. having chicken pox weren't my only problems. Jesse came in, threw his books on our couch, and told me to give them to D.J. to color in; he was dropping out of school.

Jesse:

I'd had it with school, with Dad pushing me, with everything. The only reasons I stayed in this long were the pretty girls. Some of them liked me just because I was a rebel, though that wasn't why I rebelled. I was super sneaky at times, but I'd grown to like that part, I did it more openly. For instance, I wound up lying about my age to get a tattoo this Christmas, with some money some relatives had sent me.[52]

I came in my leather outfit and really long hair, and told Pam I wanted to pursue music full time; I planned to quite school.

Pam:

I couldn't let Jesse do this. I think he knew, deep down, I'd say "no." And, honestly, I think that's what he wanted, even if he wouldn't admit it.

While Mindy was singing D.J. to sleep for her nap, Joey stopped by. He'd

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[49] "Crushed"

[50] "A Pox In Our House"

[51] "Viva Las Joey," even after they reconcile, Joey would figure it didn't pay to try and tell him right away. However, he'd mention it soon after what we see in the episode.

[52] Visible in numerous episodes, we don't know when Jesse gets it, but knowing him, the answer is probably quite early. Even if it's just something the actor had, this is in character for him, and since he had the option of hiding it (like when an unmarried character is played by an actor with a wedding ring) it's different from Steph's ears, which couldn't be hidden.

developed this new voice that made wood puns - he wanted to try it out on me. He said one day he might use it with a woodpecker or woodchuck or something.

Then, I asked Joey to help me convince Jesse to stay in school.

Jesse:

Pam knew one of my sore spots - I could not stand how childish Joey acted. And, it irked me that he'd have way more education than I would if I dropped out then.

I was really rebelling against society. I wanted to do my own thing; I didn't care what anyone said. Pam had it good, but I didn't want to follow her way, despite how cheerful it was. Inside, I was probably searching so hard I wasn't seeing what was right in front of me. However, I thought I could find what I wanted with my music. "Musicians get paid," I told her. "I'll find somewhere to play. In the meantime I'll be free."

"You got that right, Mister, you'll be working for free a lot," she chided.

That wasn't the worst of it - when Joey started making jokes, I complained about how Joey thought life was a joke. Then, Joey said, "No, Life is a cereal." Then he recited that crazy "Let's get Mikey" commercial, complete with voices.

Joey asked about the baby. "D.J.'s better, but Jesse's not very good," she quipped.

"Aw come on, Pam, give me a break," I whined.

"Good baby, Jess. See, you can do voices!"

I know Joey was just trying to break the tension, but he was driving me nuts. So, I gave him a light smack on the head like on the Three Stooges.

"Would you like some cheese with that whine?" Pam teased. "Jesse, there are plenty of things to do with music that you can't do if you don't finish high school."

"Name one!"

"Okay, disc jockey, you've said you'd love playing on the radio if not in a band. You could start a club like the Smash Club. And, if music doesn't work, you can open a garage and work on cars and motorcycles," Pam finished, counting on her fingers.

"That's more than one." I walked around for a second while thinking, then turned back to Pam and held out a hand. "Look, if I'm a success in music I can always land a job based on name recognition if it deals with music. I think I could run my own garage from scratch, too, or get enough money to find people to run a club."

I had her flustered. I thought maybe, for once, I'd win an argument with her.

Pam:

Jesse wouldn't listen to reason. He shrugged off the possibility that he might not like Dad's business - and, personally, I wondered if he'd even accept the job, though he later did. He refused to think about how he needed to gain the skills to run a club or garage. So, I asked Joey to leave, and he went into the kitchen to eat.

I pointed a finger at Jesse, and promised my undying love for him no matter what he did, even if he'd dropped out in Kindergarten. Our dad was never a strong Christian, the way he mismanaged anger, but I was gung to show that love we're supposed to show.

"Aw man, now you tell me; I didn't think you could drop out then," he said.

"Jesse, that's not the point." With my hands on my hips, I explained, "The point is, you would have missed so many good things. Like the time I taught you to dance in one night so you could learn for a school function. I don't think that's the only night I've stayed up with you, either. Or the times I've helped you to understand some of the school

assignments you've had."

"Yeah; you've always been there for me," Jesse said thankfully.

"You could miss out on so many things if you drop out now. Please, Jesse?"

Jesse shook his head, pretending not to hear, and I knew it was time for the ultimate. I walked into the kitchen as he continued. "Pamela, you're happy here, you're always braggin' on D.J. for something, you want to be a housewife. I've accepted that. I know I got upset when you and Danny eloped, 'cause I felt he was takin' you away from me, but now…" I returned with a menacing gaze, and pointed a couple carrots directly at his face. His eyes got wide. "No," he said, beginning to back up.

"Don't make me use these carrots," I threatened. Backing him up onto the couch, I smiled lovingly, yet with a stern look in my eyes. "Jesse, I'm not joking. You're going back to school. Or I will find a way to make you walk around with carrots sticking out your nose, and everyone will call you 'Walrus Katsopolis.' I'd rather have Hermes."

Jesse:

I finally agreed, after which she let me up. I was very glad neither Joey or Mindy had heard that name "Hermes." "Okay, I'll go back." I hated letting my feelings show to anyone, but she was one person I usually could stand to let see my tender side. "It's just so hard. I mean, none of this stuff's gonna matter, is it? All those brains going on to college or somethin', yeah, I can see why they put up with it."

"Jesse, Danny and I eloped before the end of the school year.[53] I could have just dropped out, too. But, you know why I didn't?"

"So you could bug me with that 'good example' stuff?" I asked sarcastically.

"No," she said, slightly frustrated. It's amazing how, the few times we argue, Becky's face and tone sound just like Pam's would at these times. "Jesse," Pam persisted, "I did it because it's an accomplishment. Just like raising children; when D.J. learns some new skill, I realize I was a part of that. It's something that years from now, even if it's the only thing you finish, you can say you got through it. You toughed it out.

"You may never get a record deal. You might have an accident and be paralyzed, so you can't ride a motorcycle like you want or even walk again. But no matter what, if you finish school, you'll be able to say you accomplished something. And, the Jesse I know never backed down from a challenge," Pam finished, gazing sorrowfully at me.

"Aw man, not the puppy dog look, too," I complained bitterly. "Okay, okay, Pam. I'll tough it out," I pledged. "I'll make sure I have one accomplishment in life." I hated to admit it, but I knew she was right.

Unfortunately, my promise would only stand until the band and I played the Smash Club for the first time, something that was a major accomplishment in my mind. She kept this visit to their apartment from our parents, like I asked. I think she knew if she'd told our parents, it would have made Dad and I have a big fight and I'd want to drop out all the more.

Danny - Dec. 24, 1978:

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[53] Their last date ever was the senior prom, which in most schools is weeks before graduation. It's almost certain that was before the school year ended. It is on "Prom Night." Pam would finish high school; she wouldn't have had D.J. till February, 1977, anyway, according to "13 Candles" (Feb. 1990), "Driving Miss D.J." (She'd recently turned 15 in spring of 1992), etc.; 8 months after Pam's graduation.

I caught the last flight in before Christmas morning. Irene stayed with D.J., while Nick waited for Jesse to come home from riding around.

We met at the gate and embraced as if I'd been gone four years in World War Two. We couldn't wait to tell each other everything, and though it was little, I couldn't wait to give her a gift. We got home after midnight, but what mattered was, we were together. We still had some of that youthful desire to always be with each other, even though we'd spoken on the phone quite often.

I didn't promise never to let work take me away like I used to, though. We were maturing. As we discussed Jesse's rebellion, D.J.'s chicken pox, and all the other little struggles we each had while I was gone, there was a sense that we were starting to truly grow into a cohesive unit. We understood each other very well.

We cuddled on the couch. Some things about our life - work, the lack of money, and so on - continued to provide small annoyances. But, they weren't earth-shattering. What I lacked in faith, Pam had. And, even I had faith we'd always overcome the problems, though she was the one concentrating on the Lord more.

I said, "We're getting pretty good at making it through tough times, huh, Pam?"

"We did it again. Just like we always do."

"Just like we always will," I guaranteed as we embraced.

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4. Jumping Jesse: Sneaky Plan, Faked Graduation - March-June, 1980

Jesse - Mon., March 3, 1980:

Danny and Pam had it all, as far as they were concerned. They planned for their own home, and Danny had been promised a full-time job with the station where he had worked while in school. I, on the other hand, was sick of school. The only thing I loved that year was running the principal's toupee up the flagpole the previous week.[54]

I'd stayed in till I'd had a major accomplishment. My band played lots of gigs, but last Friday, we played the Smash Club for the very first time. We were loved.

Monday, I prepared for yet another boring English class. My mind was on my band, my motorcycle, and the future. I didn't want to put up with three more months of this. I'd never liked studying in the first place, and I didn't think I needed a diploma.

"Read any good books lately?" Mr. Pearson, the teacher, asked us.

"Yeah, the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue," I cracked. The class laughed as I made a few other wisecracks. I enjoyed driving him crazy. His knowledge intimidated me a bit, too, but I disliked a lot about school then.

"Mr. Katsopolis, since you insist on running your yap, the class was assigned a poem to memorize. You may recite first."

I grinned as I stood in front of the class. "The poem? Ah, yes. You know, it would be cool to put it to music, maybe the band and I could play it."

"Mr. Katsopolis, please recite the poem. We are not getting any younger."

"Oh, sure. 'Oh captain, my captain.' You want the whole poem?"

The class was cracking up now. "That was the assignment. Did you even look at it?" he groused, knowing my habits from numerous earlier incidents that year.

"Sure. 'Oh captain, my captain.' See, I remembered that."

"That's because that's the title, and you were given it. This is a test of your

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[54] "Up On The Roof"

reading, not…" I could tell he almost said he wasn't testing our memory – he was too clever to fall into that trap, though. "Do you intend to recite anything, or do you plan to waste your life on nothing but rock lyrics?" he asked tiredly.

I'd glanced at the poem, not caring to try hard to memorize it, as I considered my dumb plan that weekend. I finalized the plan as the others guffawed, though I'd pondered it for weeks, waiting for the right moment. I was embarrassed about everyone laughing at me, but that was also the best way to catch them off guard.

"Can I answer that after I go to the restroom?"

"I will gladly allow you, as the class's combined interest in learning shall surely increase upon your departure." He excused me, grateful to have some peace. I left.

I wouldn't have done this unless I knew my parents would be gone. Mom had left for a beautician appointment. Dad was at work.

I cleaned out my locker, taking all my other notebooks so I could look busy - I left my English one behind in that class. Then, I walked out of school.[55]

I hopped on my motorbike, took one look back, and shouted with glee. "Now we're talkin'!" I hollered as I screamed down the road. I hid my enthusiasm long enough to stop near home, park my bike on a side street, and sneak into my house.

The phone rang. I almost blew it big time, though; I was way too cocky. "This is my…" I said in only a semi-old voice.

I winced. "This is my father" - how dumb could I get? Luckily, I'd caught myself.

Slapping my forehead, I recovered by spouting, "…my favorite chair, get off of there, you dumb cat!" Hey, they didn't know we didn't have a cat. "Hello?!"

"Mr. Katsopolis? This is the high school principal's office…" the secretary began.

"Oh, yeah, you're probably calling about Jesse. Yeah, such a shame we have to move, and now he comes down with the stomach flu. His mom just went to pick him up and get his motorbike into the trunk."

"Well, we weren't told…"

"Oh, you weren't told?!?! You figure some kid's just gonna come in and throw up all over your desk? Is that how you like to be told?! Listen here, Miss, I pay my taxes, and I expect the school my son attends to be run right!" Yeah, I was showing off; I loved this too much. "You should have the common sense to know that a boy's gonna call his mom and she'll rush down and get him 'cause it's her last baby, and she knows all the stress of moving is making him sick!" I finished ranting.

"Well…I'm sorry, but a student isn't allowed to just leave without…"

"I expect a more understanding school when my son transfers! You got a pen and paper?" She quickly grabbed one. "Listen, effective tomorrow, this is our new address." I gave them a nonexistent one. "We need to get our new number connected, so don't call this old one. I'll call you back with the new one, it was here someplace. Dumb cat must have carried it off. I'll send an excuse note back with him in a couple days, if what he thinks is the flu isn't food poisoning." I'd asked a friend whose dad was a doctor what would be similar to stomach flu, as if I knew someone with those symptoms.

I almost hung up in a huff, but then realized they could try to call back unless I made sure they didn't. "Good, listen, we're getting our service disconnected today, it's a good thing you called now. Oh, here's the electrician's truck. Listen, I'll call you back from a friend's phone. Here's my wife and Jesse now."

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[55] "Educating Jesse"

Their secretary was jumpy from my harsh tone, but she was sharp, I had to give her that. “Er…Can you please…put your wife on the phone?”

I’d sounded pretty upset - of course, they knew my dad could get like that. I tried to be extra sweet impersonating my mom. As my mom, I confirmed what I’d said before, then added, “We’ve been getting some crank calls. Lots of them in fact. Look, until we get our new phone hooked up, why don’t you call our son’s personal number. You’ll let them do that, won’t you, dear?”

I impersonated a very sick me agreeing. I went up and unplugged my phone after hanging up. My plan was for them to call an unlisted number, but I had to find one first. When I couldn’t, I simply had us moving to Miami and invented a number.

Pam - Mar. 4, 1980:

I asked Jesse the next day why his phone didn’t seem to be working. I’d tried to call several times to tell him something D.J. had done that was so cute. He didn’t appreciate that sort of thing, but I got so excited sometimes I had to tell someone.

Then, Jesse asked the strangest thing. He wondered if I’d told our parents his phone wasn’t working. “No,” I said curiously. “Are you up to something, Jesse?”

“Who, me? What makes you think that?”

“I could say your general attitude toward proper behavior,” I quipped. I guessed it could also be a girl pestering him; or, worse, her ex-boyfriend. Although, I’ll give him credit, he didn’t fool with other guys’ current girls. So, I doubted it. “Jesse, promise me if you’re in trouble you’ll tell me, okay?”

“Sure, Sis, I’d tell you. Now, there’s no problem, so don’t worry about it.”

“Okay. Oh, you know that girl Judy and I hung out with in high school? Well, Judy and she went to college in L.A., and Judy got a job down south, but our friend’s married and coming back here this spring. And, she’s going to have a baby, too.”

“Super. Just what this world needs, more diapers to change,” he said sarcastically.

I couldn’t help but laugh. “Now, that’s the Jesse I know.” And, with that, I was satisfied that he was okay. His phone began working again a week later.

Jesse - Mar. 24, 1980:

While I could pull the wool over my parents’ eyes by pretending to be sick for a while, I couldn’t do it for three months. And, it took a lot more to trick Pam. Besides, the school would just send the homework to me, right?

That’s why, on the 7th, I “announced” I’d switched schools. I asked my dad to sign last year’s yearbook. He wrote, and I copied his handwriting. I also made up a note from a doctor stating I was “under the care of Dr. Stanley Livingston for food poisoning and malaria, with concerns about possible leprosy.” I sent that note to the school, faking the writing. A day later, on the 8th, I sent a forged note supposedly from my dad. It told of our move to Miami, and explained that I‘d be attending “Hacienda High School” once I got over my malaria. They were told to send my records there.

They sent my records and most recent grades to the phony address of Hacienda High, while sending my report card to the phony Miami address where I‘d said we moved. My parents expected me to get my grades, though.

So, I brought the mail in today, and snuck my last report card in the middle. I started an argument with my dad - which was like sparking a forest fire where it hadn’t

rained for months. In the middle, I pulled out my report card, just so he could see what it was, but not which grading period. I ripped it into a million pieces as we yelled. He ranted and raved about my tearing it up, but did nothing about it. He figured it would be useless - he didn't know how useless.

Since my girlfriend Carrie and I had already bought tickets, I could still sneak into the prom, saying I'd flown back for it.

Jesse - Sat., May 3:

I took Carrie to the prom, figuring I had everyone so confused they wouldn't know which end was up.

My stomach turned as I heard one of the chaperones; that same stuffy English teacher, Mr. Pearson. "Feeling better, Mr. Katsopolis?" he inquired casually. "Will you return Monday, or do you plan to come down with bubonic plague by then?"

I suggested Carrie find a seat for us while I talked to him. She did.

"If you have dropped out, Mr. Katsopolis, I advise you to be frank. And by that, I do not mean to get around our search for Jesse by changing your name to Frank."

"Good idea; I happen to like Jesse. You know, that was Elvis' twin's name, except he was stillborn."

"Much like your academic career," he sniffed. "We have stopped wasting our time, after inquiries to schools that do not exist and doctors who are nowhere to be found. We are letting you go. If, given all your tomfoolery throughout your stay in our school system, you wish to be a troublemaker and consider this your ultimate victory over us, you are now free to do so. Good day." He left hurriedly, in a huff.

"That was easy," I told myself smugly. I walked to our table. Carrie asked what the teacher wanted. "Oh, nothing; just wanted to see how I'd been. I told you and the band I wasn't gonna be here for a while; now I don't have to come at all."

"But, Jesse, you're graduating, right?"

"Look, let's not worry about school and just make it a great night, okay?" She agreed, and we left it at that.

I figured I could stay away from home every day, as I'd been doing, and I'd be in the clear. The Smash Club's owner loved having me work there; he thought I'd graduated in January, as some kids did who only had a one-semester course to complete their requirements at the start of their senior years.

My brilliant plan hit a major snag, though.

Pam - June 5, 1980:

I wasn't totally suspicious of Jesse. But, I wondered about a comment Mom made once. She was glad Jesse was over at our place doing homework, and getting closer to us, as he'd told her he was. She felt it would settle him down. Jesse had been over here a few times, but not much. And, he never had any homework. He informed me he was suddenly doing it all in study hall. That was so unlike Jesse, I can't begin to describe it.

My instinct worked really well with D.J.. If there was something amiss, I'd catch him. If I was wrong - I hoped I was - I would be congratulating him on a great accomplishment. And, I sincerely wanted to believe he had finished school.

I really felt this confrontation was important, however. It sometimes seemed like I was always the best one at keeping him out of trouble.

Jesse:

I was ready to go out on my motorbike well before school began, but just as I said goodbye to my parents, Pam knocked at the door. I froze - what was she doing here? And, how did she manage not to be late for once? I determined she must have gotten up an hour earlier than usual just to be done in the bathroom.

"Jesse, so good to see you," she proclaimed, seeming natural but making me raise my guard. I loosely put an arm around her for a second as she embraced me. "Danny didn't have to go in to work till later, so he's watching D.J.. Mom and Dad can watch her this afternoon; I arranged to take you to school."

My eyes widened, and my jaw tightened. "You what?"

"To school, so we can celebrate your great accomplishment!"

"My what?!" Was my cover going to get blown in front of our folks? I tried hard not to let them see me sweat. However, I had no idea what Pam would do.

"I know you brush it off, but you toughed it out," she said as I glanced away. "I'm so proud of you."

I finally agreed, but I was trembling inside. "Oh…yeah, I did, didn't I?" I figured I could get out of it by making up some sort of party, though I hadn't wanted one from them. "But, uh, my friends and I were gonna go out ridin' right after school to celebrate."

"Oh, that's okay. Have them come to our place. You didn't want a big gathering. You told everyone you wanted to handle it yourself. But, let me give you that great sendoff when you go wherever you're going the night before graduation."

That hadn't worked. Could I fake sick this soon? I'd planned to start being sick this evening. It would last through tomorrow, badda bing, no graduation.

That failed, too. My folks and Pam felt my forehead and said I didn't have a fever. Oh, well, if I went now, and hung out through the day, I could argue I overexerted myself.

As Pam drove me there, I complained, "Stop babying me. This is crazy, I feel like I'm seven, not seventeen."

"It's for your own good, Jesse." She pulled over to a side street near the school, and stopped the car. I began sweating profusely.

Pam:

I could have accused him right then and there, but I had no concrete proof. The evidence was mounting and convincing that something was up, though. I knew he could have been doing something else dumb instead. However, I got too excited sometimes. So, I blurted, "Jesse, are you graduating?"

"What? Why, of course I am, I'm just gonna be sick…I mean, I will be sick by tonight…" He held up a finger and tried to correct himself again. "No, actually, you know what, I'm very sick right now. Could we just go home?"

"I had this speech all prepared about how I was so happy to see you off one last time." I shook my head sadly. I wanted him to think about how proud I would have been. I knew this attitude - he wanted to avoid me at all costs. I hoped I could make him think. "You haven't had any homework for three months, Jesse," I announced. That was a guess, but I knew he couldn't have had much. "Mom and Dad never saw a report card from your last grading period. They say you tore it up during a fight, but I don't buy that

one. And, this morning…."

"That's it…" he said, trying to bolt out the door. I grabbed his arm, and gave that look as he turned to glare at me.

"Jesse, I will always love you with all my heart. That's what big sisters are for. It's what God wants us to do. I've been so proud. You've never smoked, you've never been in a gang, you've never taken a drink, you've never done drugs." I smiled with assurance as he agreed easily to each of these. "I know you've never liked school, except for inventing ways to slack off and bug teachers. You don't have to feel bad if you didn't keep that promise. I will always love you unconditionally," I finished tenderly.

I could tell he wanted out of that car in the worst way. Mom had wondered what he was up to, but she knew I was best for this. She also knew I'd keep it secret unless there was a big problem, but she was willing to accept that. However, he either couldn't or wouldn't talk. By this time, I figured I knew - but I wanted him to tell me.

"Jesse, did you drop out of school?"

Jesse:

I relaxed a little when she said the words I needed to hear - "I won't tell anybody." Words she would take to her grave. Man, what a sister! I couldn't let Mom or Dad think I was a failure. I knew what every one of my teachers probably thought of me already. I figured our parents would really scream. But, she loved me no matter what.

Still, I felt ashamed, especially because of the love she was showing. I couldn't bring myself to admit it. "Look, Pam," I argued, desperately changing the subject, "I never did that other stuff. You'd have to tell if I did that, to get me help." She nodded. "But, if I did something that dumb, dropping out only hurts me, right? Right. End of discussion. Let's go," I said hurriedly, facing back toward the front of the car. I hoped she wouldn't press me. I couldn't lie to her any more, and yet I couldn't bring myself to tell her the truth. I didn't want to boast about it when she was being so merciful.

Not that it mattered. Pam smiled knowingly - at least, I thought it was knowingly - and resumed our ride toward school. "I know the answer to that one," she said in a tone that was way too casual and confident. Pam parked in the student parking lot, smiled her classic, gorgeous smile and said, "Be good. I'll be here when you get out. Call if you want to hang out with your friends after school, and I'll pick you up later."

I shook my head and sighed as I left the car. It appeared she would wait till I got in the door. Why now? Why not three months ago? I had breathed so freely, I thought nobody could know. That's what made this feel like an ambush.

I walked around, angry yet sick to my stomach, and poked my head in her window. I didn't know what to say, though.

"You're getting away with this one. But, I promise, if I ever catch you thinking of joining a gang, or drinking, or doing drugs, or anything really destructive…" she whispered in a foreboding voice. She let the thought hang on the glare that was driven straight through my heart. Then, her face softened into a warm smile again. "You can fool Mom and Dad all you want, but you'll never fool me. Never! Now, it's your last day of school. Go have fun with your friends in there."

I swallowed a lump in my throat the size of Graceland. The words "Thanks, Sis" crept out of my mouth. Not only thanks for this, but for all the times she'd been there when I was in trouble. She'd made her point. Her admonition, in the midst of showing

that she basically knew my secret yet loved me anyway, kept me from doing much worse things. I knew even more clearly than before she'd catch me. She'd always love me, but if she caught me…I didn't want to think about that.

I rushed into the school, and let out a huge sigh in the bathroom, while actually shedding a tear. Then, I hung out in the halls all day. A few other seniors did, too, for a while, with exams over. The band and I joked about graduation as we loitered in the gym. A few teachers figured I only came back to gloat, so they ignored me.

I made sure my friends could get me an invitation to our reunions.[56] One of them was on the committee, so I knew he'd do that for a friend. Besides, you can bring spouses to most graduations; I could have gotten invited as a friend anyway.

Someone dared me to drive my motorbike into the school, not knowing how I'd come. So, I had Pam take me home to get my motorbike. I rode around town on it since they'd be having graduation rehearsal. They had the actual graduation downtown, as the gym was quite small. It was finally enlarged during late 1980s renovation, when it merged with another school, and changed its name to Bayview, soon before they remodeled the grade schools, too, among other things.[57]

Once I knew the rehearsal would be over, I rode my bike into the gym. I acted like they couldn't expel me because I was graduating, but in reality, they couldn't expel me because I'd quit. They could have kept me from it if I did something bad enough.[58] Most of the band assumed that I'd dropped out, anyway, as did Carrie, so I hadn't had to pretend I was for her.

My buddies and I had fun that day. I was secretly glad Pam had made me come. I felt forgiven, but she had that in reserve, just in case.

That type of scheme is what made me jump to conclusions when a boy splashed beer all over D.J. and I falsely accused her of drinking.[59] I was scared she might be just as much of a rebel, though I should have known better. She took after her mom, not me.

Pam:

Jesse never told me in so many words that he'd dropped out. But, I could tell. He had become too good at tricking Mom and Dad. I needed to show him two things. First, I wanted to tell him I'd always be there for him if he had a problem. And, second, I needed to let him know if he went too far, I'd find out. He wouldn't listen to me talk about family, let alone God, so I had to show that love in another way.

I wondered if I should have told him more about how dismal his job opportunities were. Or, about the lie he'd have to live. He told everyone he graduated, and I remember a few times hearing him mention what he did at his graduation to those like Danny who wouldn't remember that he didn't go. D.J. was sick that night, so he would have stayed home with her, anyway.

It was very sad to see Jesse hurt people with his lies. He wasn't the only one he

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[56] "One Last Kiss"

[57] The name on the banner is different in "One Last Kiss"'s flashback and "Prom Night." And, the elementary school seems to be one story in most outside footage the first few seasons, and two in at least part of "Double Trouble." Even if a floor wasn't added to it, this shows normal community growth and change, consistent with the major redistricting at the same time.

[58] They could have kept him from marching in his graduation or even from receiving his diploma if he'd does something really bad. He'd know this if he was graduating, another sign he never graduated.

[59] "Just Say No Way"

hurt by dropping out - he hurt lots of other people, too.

Still, I figured I did the right thing. Unconditional love is hard sometimes. He wasn't hurting himself near as much as he would have if he'd been doing other things. He knew if I ever found him drinking or doing drugs, I'd drive him straight to a treatment center myself - I'd told him that. But, the thing about having a brother like that is, you have to know when to pick your battles.

Jesse:

When Pam died, I went to the minister who would do her funeral and said I had to make things right with God. I took that cross necklace that she always wore and I wore it with pride.[60] It bothered me after that when I'd tell an outright lie. But, that lie was too big a part of me by then. I told pieces, like about never wearing that cardboard thing on my hat,[61] but never enough for anyone to know.

Sometimes I wonder if the day I finally confessed was a warning, like God was saying, "I let you go this far, it's time to tell the truth, or else." That's just what Pam would do - let me go so far, then expect me to shape up. She really knew how to witness about mercy and stuff just by how she lived.

Anyway, I acted groggy when I got home, then I held the thermometer under my arm to make it go up, and acted like I was really sick. I even had Dad complaining that I shouldn't have gone to school that last day.

A week later, I said I was going to school to get my diploma and last report card, which I said they were holding. I knew if I pretended to do something dumb, it would look natural. So, I stopped for hair care supplies, took about an hour to ride around, then went back home claiming my diploma and report card had either blown off the seat of my motorcycle or been stolen. Dad screamed for five minutes about how irresponsible I was, and had Mom convinced I couldn't get another one after doing something dumb like that.

Danny:

I figured Jesse was just being reckless, as usual. Pam never told me because I respected her wishes not to tell everything bad Jesse ever did, just like I tried to talk to the girls in private about their misdeeds. It shocked me that he hadn't had much homework, too. I had to let Pam handle it, though, as I suspected he was just slacking off as usual. I was too busy with my last semester of college,[62] work, and dreaming - in a controlled way, of course - of something very special. Our own house.

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[60] A necklace visible in numerous episodes, plain enough it looks to be a man's or woman's cross necklace. Since the actor had the option of wearing it or not, it should be considered part of Jesse's character.

[61] "Stephanie Gets Framed"

[62] "Fraternity Reunion" - aired in spring of 1990 - says it's been 10 years since they graduated.

IV: MAKING A HOUSE A HOME - Apr. 1980-May 1987

1. Our Own Home – Apr., 1980-Nov., 1983

Danny - Apr., 1980:

Pam and D.J. merrily pranced to a children's record as I came home from classes one day. D.J. wore a pretty red dress she'd gotten for her birthday, with a light blonde ponytail; her hair would darken as she got older, like some little kids' do. "Loo, loo, skip to the loo, skip to the loo my darling!" I sang off key as they ran and embraced me. "Or is it skip to my loo? Aw, who cares, how's my little tennis ball head?" I kidded D.J. by asking, "How's the potty training going?"

"Daddy, we did that already."

"I know, you're almost always dry, even at night," I said excitedly as I cuddled her. Pam went to get the door; Jesse had come over. "I said that because a loo is a bathroom in Britain. So, over there, 'skip to the loo,' means go to the bathroom. Of course, if it's 'skip to my loo' I guess it means you can use my bathroom.'"

D.J. scrunched up her little face and said, "Huh?"

"Sorry, guess that flew right over your head, huh? Oh, hey, Jess."

Before he could answer, Pam blurted, "Jesse, guess what. We found this really nice house over on Girard Street…"

"Wait a minute, wait a minute." I put D.J. down, ran to get the video camera, and came back quickly, with D.J. following. "Could you repeat what you just said?" I beamed as Pam laughed; that same delightful laugh I'd fallen in love with years ago.

Jesse shook his head. "I don't believe this guy; he's as logical as Mr. Spock on Star Trek, and yet he hugs everyone and get all emotional over every little thing."

"Oh, Jesse, he loves to celebrate life. Come on in." D.J. had run up to him, and Jesse scooped her up and spun her a little before putting her down. He sat on the couch with Pam and I. "I figured you'd want to hear the good news," Pam proclaimed. "I even called Danny in class, I was so excited. We found the perfect place; it just went up for sale. You know how we've dreamed of moving into the Fraser St. district? Well, we found this wonderful place on Girard Street!"

As Jesse whooped excitedly, I held up a hand. "Nothing's set in stone yet," I cautioned. Pam agreed resignedly; she could get very excited. "We still need financing, even if they accept our offer. It's a little bigger than we'd planned for right now, but we should be able to make a decent down payment, though the rates are sky high. We'll probably have to wait for it to come down in price, but with interest rates the way they are, it'll probably be on the market for a few months."[63]

As I discussed the situation, Pam noticed before anyone else that D.J. had disappeared. She ran into the kitchen.

I followed to hear Pam loudly lecturing her on how dangerous it was to get into the cleaning stuff under the sink - thankfully she hadn't opened any of the products.

"Thank goodness. D.J., you know what we've said," I said as she hung her head in shame. It broke my heart to see her sad, but she needed punished with a timeout.

I could see on D.J.'s face she knew Pam would send her to her room, but Pam had other ideas. "This is a good time for you to start punishing her," she whispered.

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[63] The approximate date of "12 years" in "A House Divided" is possible, but high interest rates then would make it more likely that the sellers would offer a lower price, knowing how hard it will be to sell otherwise. Plus, as will be shown later, consensus is that the episode is a dream, anyway.

"I know. You always have things running so smoothly when I get home. I always turned things over to you because…" I sighed as D.J. sniffled in front of me. "Mommy's right. You know not to get in the cleaning supplies. Because you did get in there, you need to be punished," I lectured lightly.

I carried her to her room myself for timeout this time, with Pam behind me, and made D.J. stay there, where she remained for five minutes till I went to get her.

Once I stepped out of her room, I said, "Thanks, Pam; you're right, it was time." I struggled a little - I really wanted to keep babying her. Having Pam there really helped, though. There's part of me that just wasn't sure how to be a good dad to kids that young, since it was our mom who handled everything.

Pam tried to sense my thoughts, and did a great job as usual. "I know you like to think of D.J. as a baby,[64] but she's three. She knows to obey because Mommy says. But, you needed to start now. I was always here with her, though, and I always will be," she reassured me, smiling broadly. "I know it takes you a while to get used to new things."

"You're right, it does. It takes me a long while sometimes," I admitted with a laugh. "When I was home I'd at least tell you she needed punished."

"You've right, we've got a very good little girl. She's learning manners, respect, compassion, all the things a child should at this age." Pam grinned broadly as we walked into the living room. After several minutes, we went up to let her out of her room, and she didn't get in those products again.

Pam always wanted to be the best. We weren't always doing the right thing, we were young and inexperienced. But, we were doing very well. "I guess I got complacent, too, Pam. You always have everything running so smoothly, it's incredible." We embraced and kissed warmly. We were in love, and knew it. We were growing from the post-honeymoon struggles into the family years.

Pam – On freezing, etc.:

I was proud of Danny. I knew this was a good time to start him punishing D.J., since it was for something dangerous. He tended to lean on me a little more than most husbands might, but the important thing was, he was willing to discipline.

What we really needed was a way to prevent such problems in the future. Only later, when Stephanie was a baby, would we come up with the idea - a freeze command that the whole household obeyed. It would be used to make the person stop all movement, generally just in an emergency.[65]

He still was inclined to pamper D.J.. This house had four bedrooms, with one having a beautiful picture window and a lovely part in front to store things, or just to lean against the wall and write in your diary. Well, guess who would get that bedroom - D.J.. I thought it was a nice master bedroom, it was a tad bigger than the second biggest one, but that was Danny for you. While I had to caution Danny against being too strict and controlling, I also had to caution him against being overindulgent.

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[64] Pam not being there led to depression that kept him from punishing Michelle. Still, fans feel he might wait till here, since Pam had things running so smoothly and it was his first.

[65] They say "freeze" and the person stops like in a "stop action" film, but it's really a big rule in some homes, and Jesse and Joey would know of the rule was there way before moving in. In "Middle Age Crazy" Danny says they were much more experienced now and they'd made mistakes with D.J.. Not having their "freeze" command early would be one mistake, to him.

Danny:

I went around telling everyone about the house maybe working out, because I knew Pam was so excited she'd have told everyone it was a sure thing.

As it turned out, it took a few months till they came down in price, but the market was so rough we managed to buy it, and get financing. I had steady income from work by then, and Pam had her babysitting money.

It worked out nicely, as I discovered lots of our family members were willing to help a little, if we were a couple hundred shy or something.

The biggest surprise was my biological dad. He was an attorney - I'd kidded him that one of my kids would be one of the Supreme Court's greatest minds.[66] We'd stayed in touch. And, just as we began to fret about whether we could do it, he came through.

"Danny, I wasn't very good to your mom or you kids at times," he confessed over the phone. "But, I want to help each of you some. Now, I told her not to tell anyone, but I gave Wendy a little something to help her get to Africa for her studies. And, I wanted to help you with something, too; as a little apology for ignoring you all these years."

He was the kind who never made noise about things - he was a quiet, hard worker who believed in the old Protestant work ethic. When he said a little something, he meant more than Pam or I could have imagined. It turned a barely adequate down payment into a very comfortable one, and kept us from having as many worries about house payments, though we were very glad the rates went down by 1983 so we could refinance.

I liked the fact Pam didn't have to become a nanny. I knew from interviewing pro athletes that a few used them. But, now she could just be a great at-home Mom to our own kids like she wanted.

D.J.:

I've seen that video of Dad getting that check, and going wild with hugs, so much I have every line, every portion of screen memorized. Same with moving in; I'd seen what Joey filmed for us so much it got etched into my memory.[67]

That's the fascinating thing. Memory is affected so much by pictures, videos, and stories; it's hard to say what I recall because I clearly remember being there, and what I recall because I've seen it. The first years, up to seven or eight, are usually not that crisp and clear, though certain things remain. So, it's easy to be off by a year or two.

Stephanie's even more like that when it comes to Mom - she remembers Mom, and might vividly recall getting Mr. Bear, her favorite stuffed bear, when Michelle came home. That's about it, though - more of it is general thoughts, like singing "On Top of Spaghetti" because we always did,[68] but not recalling a specific instance.

I probably don't remember this as much as I recall all the pictures and everything. It's still memory to me, though, and my brain filled in parts that aren't on film. And, it's one I'll treasure, even if it is a compilation, because it helps me remember Mom. I had more years with her, but it's still fun to recall this time, especially now with my own kids.

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[66] "A Pinch for a Pinch," he sees Michelle this way

[67] "A House Divided," even if the memory is etched in, she can still get the number of years mixed up off the top of her head, along with her age at the time. Plus, as noted elsewhere, the episode's likely a dream. Fan consensus was that they bought in 1980, when Danny graduated. When Pam was pregnant with Steph also works; if the house was on a year before purchase, but memory from age 3-5 is spotty.

[68] "Goodbye, Mr. Bear"

Pam – Moving In:

When we finally were able to move in, near the end of the year, D.J. ran through the house like crazy, squealing with delight. The staircases were a constant source of amusement the first few months, as she could go up one and come down the other. She was always trying hard to be the best, and tricky – and sometimes a little sneaky – things were fun to her, because they made her think.

The house was like a castle to her. We'd planned on something more moderate in size, but with the slump due to interest rates being so high, and the lowering of the price, it was too good to pass up.

Now, Jesse could drop by any time, which he did. And, Danny and I promised, if he would ever have to move in with a baby, he could, as long as he worked hard and paid his share of the house payments and didn't bring any bad elements into the house. We didn't think he'd do that, but we weren't sure. At least now, we had room.

Jesse – Apr. 1981 - The Fonz of the '80s:

I strolled happily into Pam and Danny's house – Danny had seen me behind him on my motorcycle. From my excited mood, Pam knew something was up. Sadly, from my lifestyle, she could tell it was another girl. "It's a good thing you don't get girls' names tattooed on you, Jesse; you'd have them all over your body," Pam cracked.

"You're funny, you know that, Pam. So, the little one's in bed, huh?"

"Yes, it's almost midnight," Danny noted. "I just got in from work."

"Man, I feel sorry for little kids. Anyway, I figured you and Pam would be up. This girl and I, we just got engaged."[69]

"Yeah, sure; and tomorrow you're running for governor. Jess, you just turned eighteen," Danny said with a grin, figuring I couldn't be serious.

We weren't really thinking marriage yet, but Danny's comment put me on the defensive. Opposition like that tended to make me want to do things even if I really hadn't planned on it. "Come on, man, you and Pam were ready then."

"Jess, I was getting a college education, and I had a show on campus."

Pam said further that, "We had direction in our lives; and even then, we admit now we should have waited. We've told you that."

"Yeah, well, what if I don't want to wait? We've known each other a few months, and we just had a great time in the back seat of her car." Pam gave me that look. "Don't worry, she's over eighteen. I know the law. I know underage girls are off limits, just like gangs and stuff. Now that I'm eighteen, I'm sure you've added that to the list of things where…" I looked appreciatively at Pam, but didn't reveal too much of myself. "I don't know what you'd do, but I know it'd be because you care. But I love this girl."

"Jesse, you say that about every girl," Danny noted. "How they ever picked Henry Winkler over you for the role of the Fonz, I'll never know," he joked.

Pam and I sat on the couch. "I really am proud of you for obeying the law."

"Come on, Pam, you know I would."

She told me she was sure. "Men are supposed to be breadwinners, though. It was easier for me; and even then, Danny's right. We struggled. We're very lucky to have this house. Danny was very lucky to get a good job out of college. Your prospects are pretty bad." I agreed; I was playing in a band I'd put together, and working at a garage. "I hate

[69] He mentioned being "engaged" in the episode "I've Got A Secret"

to be so blunt, but you are nowhere near ready to even think of marriage."

"Yeah, but I don't want all that family stuff like you guys. We just, well…"

I hammed and hawed as Danny spoke. "Jess, the type of woman you go out with is not ready for such a big responsibility. All you and any woman want is fun. You know that. You get married because you want to spend the rest of your lives together."

"All right, I promise, I won't." I sighed, turned slowly to Pam, and muttered, "It hasn't happened or anything, but, you know that promise to let me move in if a woman and I… well, you know, if I'd have to take care of a kid….it's still there, right?" That was what I'd really meant by "engaged" – I knew marriage might be expected if I did.

"Always," she assured me. "You'd have to stop all these dates, maybe work two jobs, but Danny and I would always let you move in if you had to." Luckily, that never happened, so I never had to take them up on it. But, I was grateful, anyway.

"Thanks, Pam. I guess it is crazy for me to think about a relationship that lasts that long, huh?" We laughed together at the thought.

Joey – Oct. 31, 1981 – Halloween, allergies, other various things:

I took D.J. trick or treating; Pam was pregnant with Stephanie. We all thought Steph looked ready to start talking right away when we saw her after she was born. I managed not to cry with the others like I had D.J., but it was still awesome.

D.J. was Dorothy this year, and I was the tin man. Along with my outfit, I had a funny walk and made creaking noises that she thought were hilarious. Danny took the girls dressed as the Tidy Bowl Man when Pam was pregnant with Michelle.

Pam and Danny were adamant that there be no witches, ghosts, or anything scary around the girls. His interest was keeping them safe and not scared. Pam recognized an evil part to some of the stuff. It wasn't right to "celebrate" it, but they thought it was okay if treated like a big costume ball. Hence, the Joker – who was a bad guy – was fine, but Elvira was as spooky as any of them got, and that was just one year. Nicky and Alex and the others were all taught the same – play dress-up, but nothing scary. That way, you're not honoring the devil, you're just at an outside costume party.

Usually, Pam took them, and I went along for fun. The girls wore costumes like angels, or a favorite Disney character, or an animal. We had a whole zoo one year. I was the Cowardly Lion from the Wizard of Oz, Danny a giraffe, Michelle a Care Bear, and Steph a parrot. D.J. was in tenth grade then and not interested, and Jesse and Becky just stayed home with the twins and passed out candy, they weren't a year old yet.

D.J. didn't always like really furry costumes; she was fine riding horses but some stuff got to her if she was around it a long time.[70] The younger girls didn't have allergies, but nuts caused Michelle problems when little. That's normal with small kids, because their bodies aren't built completely then.

D.J. – Kimmy and Halloween:

Starting in first grade, Kimmy's parents brought her to go with us. She liked spooky stuff, but after Mom explained her point of view, Kimmy agreed not to dress in anything bad. She knew she'd get more candy in our neighborhood, so she heeded our wishes. She'd been E.T. in Kindergarten, only because the movie was so big; she even

[70] Being in an enclosed space for many hours with an animal, as in "You Pet It, You Bought It," is different than out in the open with a horse, as in other episodes.

wore the outfit to school, when her parents were too lazy to do laundry for a few days.

Dad came up with a cute idea when Kimmy first came with us. We represented sugary cereals – he said it was perfect since we were out for candy, anyway. Kimmy was Count Chocula – she joked about sucking all the chocolate out of the city, but that's it. Joey was the Cocoa Puffs bird. I was the Trix rabbit. Dad was Cap'n Crunch – he didn't go the next year, he had to work. Steph was a toddler leprechaun – Lucky Charms - and Mom was Tony the Tiger. She didn't usually have the personality of one, but said when it came to protecting her kids, she did. We did that two straight years, it was so much fun. And, by the time Kimmy and I were in third, she'd forgotten about the scary stuff and was just weird. She confined her interest in scary stuff to a few movies.

Pam – Jan., 1982 – Baby Stephanie and Norton the Duck:

"This isn't right."

"What's wrong, Dear?" I asked D.J.. She was holding her pillow person – an adorable pillow with eyes, arms, and legs – and moping on the couch.

"Everyone's paying attention to baby Stephanie, saying she's soooo cute," D.J. complained. "All I have is this Pillow Person."

I put the baby, now two weeks old, in her bassinette and put an arm around D.J.. "I know it's rough, honey. But, you loved that pillow person when I brought him home for you, when I brought Stephanie home from the hospital."

D.J. agreed sullenly. "It's okay, I guess. I made a new friend today, anyway, so I don't really need it as much. But, why couldn't I have been an only child?"

I ignored the "new friend" comment to focus on D.J.'s main concern. We knew one of the negative aspects of waiting till a child was old enough to play independently and help a little with a baby was that she'd be too accustomed to having all the attention all the time. However, I explained that D.J. could be a great big sister. She'd been super excited about doing that before Stephanie was born, after all. She was ready to do everything, even change diapers.

Danny wasn't ready for her to do that yet, and even I thought she was a few years too young for diapers. But, I was excited, and in my excitement I couldn't tell D.J. was having mixed feelings. On the other hand, I don't think she understood, even though we tried to tell her, just what having a sister would mean.

"Here, while she's awake, why don't you hold Stephanie?" I chuckled. "Daddy will think I'm nuts for letting you hold her when you won't be five for a couple weeks," I said as I adjusted pillows and showed D.J. how to hold her arms and keep them still.

"If you want me to give in by looking at how cute she is, it won't work."

"Oh, no, Dear. Just talk to baby Stephanie. She likes hearing people talk to her in a nice, tender voice," I said as she started to gurgle. "Listen, it's almost like she wants to start talking herself." I finally handed the baby to her.

D.J. knew I wouldn't back down. "Okay," she said reluctantly. "Hey, Stephanie. I'm D.J.. Guess I get to be your big sister forever, huh? Well, maybe it won't be so bad. It was just Mommy and me all day. But I'll be in Kindergarten this fall. And Norton and I have a good time here."

I raised my eyebrows. "Who's Norton?"

"Norton, my new friend. He's right over there," she indicated with her head.

"Oh," I said, suddenly realizing she meant an imaginary friend. I went and

pretended to shake his hand. “What a charming boy you are, Norton.”

“Mommy, Norton is a duck,” D.J. said with a hint of annoyance.

“I knew you had a duck all along.” D.J. shook her head, but said nothing.

Danny came through the kitchen, having come home from work. “You what?!” He noticed D.J. holding the baby. “Are you, uh, sure she can do that?” he asked me.

“I’m fine, Daddy,” D.J. said with a little insistence. “Say ‘hi’ to Norton.”

“Where…honey, you and D.J. didn’t have a duck follow you home from the park, did you?” Danny asked, fidgeting as he looked around for him.

I couldn’t stop giggling at Danny. “Dear, Norton is imaginary,” I told him. “The name probably came from a local history show,” I said. Recently, we’d seen on the independent station Danny works for about this eccentric fellow who went around calling himself Emperor Norton of the United States back in the 1860s.

“Oh, right. I knew that.” He told D.J., “That’s fine, honey, but tell Norton we won’t bow down to him.”

“Why would you do that? He’s just a duck.”

“Yeah, why would you, Daddy,” I teased. Out of D.J.’s hearing, I quipped, “If she wanted an emperor, she’d have made him a penguin.” Norton the Duck was rather regal in his actions, but never really bossy. D.J. kept him as an imaginary friend for a little over a year, till she became friends with Kimmy and some other classmates. Stephanie would up adopting Mr. Bear as her friend after Michelle was born.

Danny:

We shared our lives with that duck off and on for a while. He came around mostly when we were busier with Stephanie.

Ironically, D.J. didn’t want Joey doing the voice for Norton. I guess that way, she kept it all in her imagination. That makes sense, in a way – I don’t know how anyone else could know what an imaginary friend sounded like.

We’d wanted three, probably four kids, and tried to plan them four to five years apart so the older one could play by herself and help a little with a baby. Some parents try to plan them closer or don’t plan at all, but we felt this was best.

Jesse showed no signs of settling down, though I said he had to sometime. Now, Nick would have to work till he was past sixty before handing the business over, even if our next was a boy. That was like Nick – I could see him doing it till he was eighty.

Jesse – Working a little for Nick, job interview:

After a while, Pop sort of gave up hope. I didn’t mind. I didn’t want to be tied down. I enjoyed the carefree life with the band. I worked a bit on odd jobs here and there. I even worked for my dad when I was short on funds. The offer was always open, though he tried to cajole me once by making me interview if I wanted it; and, when Mom was there with me, she started to embarrass me.[71] But, inherit the business? No way.

Joey – Mar., 1983:

D.J. grew to like Stephanie, especially once she was a toddler. Pam was great at working with them. A lot of that, too was D.J.’s desire to be really mature. She loved to

[71] “Working Mothers,” she’d have no reason to be there to pinch him and say how cute he was at other job interviews, but Jesse is the kind to take one time and say she did it at “every one.” This, then, is likely it.

use her mind, and learn about things. It also meant one experiment in particular, when she figured she knew the concept but was just a little unsure.

While Danny was downstairs for a moment, D.J. ran some water. Then, she got Steph undressed and into the tub. "We have to make sure this is really shallow so you don't drown," she insisted; their lessons about safety had stuck. "I know what's going to happen, I'm just making sure," she said. It was like one of those Columbo mysteries where you know who did it, but you don't know how they'll find out.

What she was seeing was that Steph wouldn't go down the drain with the water; I don't know if Kimmy ever made her wonder with stuff she said, like when we had to explain what ice cream was, but D.J. knew it was safe.[72] D.J. held onto Steph while the water was going down, as she said, "Just in case, so I could catch her."

Danny came up to check on them just as the water was being let out. D.J. pointed out that she hadn't had had much water in the tub by showing where it had been wet. Still, she got sent to her room for giving the baby a bath alone. Danny was very cautious because of concerns about slipping in the tub.

Once they went to let her out, D.J. apologized right away. And, Danny and Pam admitted that she had been very safe, and told her they were proud of her for that; she didn't lose any other privileges since she had been safe, but also apologetic right away.

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2. Call of the Wild - Nov., 1983

D.J. – Steph, Climbing, and Her First Timeout:

I was happily preparing for my role as "Yankee Doodle,"[73] while glancing behind me at Saturday morning cartoons. I didn't want to appear too interested - I liked them, but I always felt a little too sophisticated for some of them; hence my regal imaginary friend. Even as a kid, reading interested me a lot more. I didn't read till I was in Kindergarten, but I picked it up very fast. Stephanie would end up learning at an earlier age, though Michelle was about the same level. School usually came pretty easy for me.[74]

I liked Strawberry Shortcake, though. I had all the dolls in the set - Dad went crazy and bought them all when I had my tonsils out in August. That figured - he bought over 100 jars of honey from me for the Honeybee fundraising drive. And, then there was the piggyback ride to Kindergarten my first day;[75] I felt on top of the world after that one. It kept me from feeling too down about not having many friends right away.

Suddenly, Dad ran from the couch and grabbed Stephanie, who was climbing from a chair to the mantle above the fireplace. The suddenness and slightly raised voice scared Stephanie - she cried as he sat her on a chair, and scolded "no climbing." She was always as excitable as Mom, who quickly heard her and raced downstairs.

Pam:

I was amazed and a little anxious about Stephanie's climbing, but Danny was having second thoughts about making her sit. "Honey, you did the right thing…wow,

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[72] "It's Not My Job" – a child of six would know this, yet could need a bit of assurance, and Kimmy could easily have made her wonder, too; the ice cream bit is from the series "Fuller House," where it's revealed Kimmy (and Jimmy) thought creamed spinach was ice cream whe little.

[73] "The Play's The Thing"

[74] "El Problema Grande de D.J.," also "The Graduates" implies she was the top student in 7-8th grade

[75] "Prom Night"

we've got a real athlete on our hands if she's climbing like that!"

"I know…I'm sorry, Stephanie, I shouldn't have scared you," Danny said tenderly. He told her she could get up, and then before she could, he picked her up and hugged her. "Daddy just doesn't want you climbing where you can hurt yourself. That was very dangerous to climb up there," he said softly as he sat and cuddled her. "That's why you had to sit there for a minute."

As Stephanie sniffled, I could see so much of me. "She frightens easily, in a way." We won't have to worry about this one, I said to myself.

Danny nodded. "I know. Deej, pay extra close attention to your sister now, in case this is the start of a major climbing phase."

"Okay, Dad."

I could tell the request wearied D.J. a little. I knelt and put an arm around her. "I know, we've talked about how you don't like it sometimes if she gets so much attention. But, if you help her now, she'll need less attention later. You're such a good big sister," I said enthusiastically. Soon, I was giving her a pep talk about all she could do to help.

Danny – Dr. Dare Rides – the First Time:

I hated seeing Stephanie cry. I'm just so protective; I had put her in timeout before I really thought about it. I had to laugh - as I told Pam, "I'll bet you're in shock. I waited till D.J. was three and here I time Steph out at 22 months."

"Well, it was for something dangerous."

I agreed. "I don't think I could do it otherwise. But, at least for this, I can."

We were much more experienced now, and Pam easily advised me, "That's fine. At this age, it's more important to focus on one behavior. It might not go away totally right away, but we need to help her learn some self-control. And, with the Christmas tree and everything next month, that'll be crucial."

"I know." I would time her out for climbing, but not much else for a while. I hated seeing them grow up, even before Pam died. Plus, Pam was usually there, anyway. The climbing subsided slowly, but it did stop in places she wasn't allowed to climb after a while. Of course, when Jesse and Joey moved in, she scaled the curtains.[76] I felt comfortable by then that she knew the rule very well, though.

Pam was right - Stephanie scared easily. Whether it was seeing Jesse after she cut his long hair and he broke his arms in an accident, or thinking we couldn't love her after she wrecked Joey's car at age eight, her sensitivity as a toddler was a sign of how hard she'd be on herself later. That made it easy to discipline her. She may have felt the call of the wild at times, but she remained in control enough her wildest wasn't bad, compared to what it could have been. By her teen years, she was quite good.

Pam was glad we had a climber like her, in a way. Otherwise, I would have waited as long as I had with D.J.. And, I was really glad I'd timed her out a few minutes later, when I read about some dumb stuntman on a motorcycle. Pam knew right away who it was when she read the article.

D.J.:

Stephanie tested the rule a little, but we watched her closely. Mom did a great job

[76] "Our Very First Show" - as the camera shifts you can see Danny talking and making her sit to settle for a moment on the side, though it's more a settling timeout, not a punishment one.

of making me want to help. Dad was always torn between trying too hard to make me help or not doing enough to encourage me.

I could never stand to see her hurt, so this was easy. Still, while having us five years apart meant I could be more independent and help more, it also meant we weren't going to get as close right away as kids do who are a few years apart or less.

Nobody could top Mom, though, for leading a family and helping us to get along - which she did a good job of overall. She knew how to handle much wilder ones. She read about this Dr. Dare in the newspaper, and she knew right away it was Uncle Jesse.

Pam – Reacting To His Dr. Dare Ride:

I was furious. I loved Jesse with all my heart, but I hated seeing him in the news like that. Yes, it could have been worse, he wasn't a criminal. Still, I had to confront him. I wanted him to live a long life, after all, and he certainly wasn't going to do it like this.

D.J. knew I was upset. When I told her it was something Jesse had done, she asked if he was okay. I replied, "Yes, but he's totally nuts," and explained. She quickly turned to Stephanie, shook her finger, and said it was a good thing we timed her out for climbing. We didn't get to church every Sunday, but usually we did, though the amount would diminish once I was gone, till the girls were grown.

Still, here D.J. remembered about prayer, and asked if we could pray for Jesse. I felt so proud! Some of my lessons were being remembered.

Once we had done that, I called one of my friends to babysit while Danny went in to work. She brought her two-year-old, Ian, along with her, and I left for the apartment Jesse had moved into a couple years earlier.

Jesse:

I'd pulled my biggest Dr. Dare stunt, riding my motorcycle on the ledge of a six story building. Some people had spotted me, called the paper, and even snapped a picture. Normally, I would have liked the publicity. But, I couldn't help but wonder what my parents would say. As you might figure, though, Pam gave me a huge lecture, whereas my parents had sort of given up trying. I got a lesson in anatomy, as she seemed to go from head to toe listing all the things I could have broken.

Pam:

I had to give Jesse a piece of my mind. I reminded him he was special, and that we would be so sad if he got hurt or died. He hadn't come to see us very much in the last few years, but we still would have missed him terribly. I wanted him to care about his life. I even brought up his supposed graduation, warning him if he did anything really bad, I'd have to tell everyone what I suspected. I reminded him I hadn't done that in over three years, so there was clearly something very important about this type of stunt.

I kept thinking about that and another mother's comments. I discussed it with my friend, thought some more, and waited till the girls were in bed and Danny and I had some time alone that evening. As we cuddled on the couch and talked, I asked, "What would we do if we ever had a kid like Jesse?"

"I don't know. Something tells me I'd have to let you handle it, though. You know how much trouble I had putting Steph in timeout. I've grounded D.J. a couple times, but she's so good compared to Jesse. And, then that Dr. Dare stunt…"

His head was spinning. I had to chuckle. Danny would try hard to get out of things he really hated to do. Usually, though, he'd sense something was necessary and do it. Starting to punish or talking about what happened if one of us died had been like that. I suspected telling D.J. the "facts of life" would be a major hurdle, too.

That was the only major downside, though. He loved family, work, and even cleaning! I'd heard horror stories from ladies my mom's age, so believe me, I was quite happy to have Danny hesitant on some things but all gung ho about cleaning.

"Seriously, Danny," I said as we snuggled, "he's a real rebel. He'd usually go to his room when sent, and when he was grounded he generally obeyed that, too. But, if a child won't stay in their room, there's a point you can't hold the door shut, or remove any more privileges, because they've all been taken away."

"Don't forget chores; I'm willing to let them clean if I have to," Danny said.

I agreed while folding my hands. This was hard for me to say, too. "You're right, we've come up with tons of other options. And…I know neither of us believes in spanking, especially what some think of when they mention spanking."

"Oh, certainly," Danny said nervously, "I can't even bring myself to say it."[77] The idea bothered him more than it did D.J. if she heard friends mention it.

"I know. I could never hurt someone badly, and I'm glad you couldn't either. We need to be in control of ourselves to discipline properly. Some do it and stay in control, but we grew up with families that never used it. We agreed not to," I said, summarizing the talks we'd had. "Maybe it's genetic, maybe not, but timeout and lost privileges work really well in our family."

"And chores; I'm willing to let them do chores, too," Danny remarked.

I agreed, and continued. "I'm talking about light fwaps, just scaring a kid like Jesse, or maybe having it pinch a little at the most. It would have to be a last resort. If the kid wouldn't obey any other restrictions…" I trailed off, disliking the thought myself.

"Right, like Dennis the Menace. Except, not staying in the corner."

"Exactly. I don't think it would come to that. D.J. accepts punishments and obeys very well. She's only been grounded once, and that just for a few days. And, grounding has been able to mean just being unable to go anywhere. Plus, if she's rude, she apologizes right away, or after thinking about it in her room. The last couple times, she's said she's sorry without being prompted, let alone sent to her room.[78] She's learning to realize when she's done wrong."

"I know, you're the best mother around," Danny complimented me.

"Thanks. This is more about Jesse, I guess," I surmised. "The other day, one of the moms in our group was talking about one of her children, and I got to thinking. Then, seeing my brother almost break his neck really drove it home. We need a plan so one doesn't get that bad. Just holding them down and patting could be very emotional. It'd work for ours, anyway, if need be, since they're sensitive enough."

Danny lowered his head. "Well…that would be up to you. We'd discuss it, but…" He fidgeted. "I couldn't bring myself to even scare them like that."

I put an arm around him. "Honey, don't worry. I'm glad you couldn't. I'm glad

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[77] "Silence Is Not Golden," Stephanie says Danny never hits before realizing Charles meant his dad hit real hard; her expression changes only after she says Danny never hits. Also, book "Dude of My Dreams," Danny runs out of ways to punish after giving Stephanie many chores

[78] Something she always was able to do on the show if she got overheated

you're so gentle, and tender, and loving. I want to be the best mother ever, though. And that means always knowing what's going on, and being ready for anything," I emphasized, reassuring him I'd never thought about it with our kids. I'd been tempted to smack Jesse after that Dr. Dare stunt, but I didn't. "If I did think it would get to that point, I'd tell you, and we'd talk about it with that Jesse type of kid."

"Okay," he said resignedly. "You're always so good at this sort of thing. You know how to handle everything. I'd be so lost without you."

I concurred. He was very involved, but also dedicated to his work, so I handled lots of things.[79] Thankfully, I would never think about the possibility of even such a light "spanking." But, if I wanted to be the best, I felt I had to be ready, just in case.

Jesse:

Pam was right - I had my music to think of, if nothing else. I wouldn't exactly get a record deal lying in the morgue. I hated it when she was so blunt, but she was right. At least she hadn't tried to make me eat sushi as punishment - that sounds like one of her tricks. I still thought about the pet fish I killed. I never wanted another pet, that black Labrador retriever had been Pam's. However, once I challenged Danny, and pledged to try it if he did something. So, I managed to start liking sushi anyway.[80]

I decided after that to start spending more time on my music, and less pulling dangerous stunts. I still did dares, but the guys never pushed me to do anything nearly that dangerous. It seems Pam threatened a very loud talk with them, too.

Anyway, that group and I went our separate ways, as a couple of them had other interests, and my best friend from that era, Pete Bianco, wound up going to Europe after a few years. I'd been the band's top performer, so I put together a new band, the Rippers, and devoted myself to music. Of course, that opened up a new can of worms.

Danny – Thanksgiving, 1983 - Sesame Street's Special Episode:

There was a time when Sesame Street was for older kids; the whole family, really. They wanted to teach about death, because the actor who played Mr. Hooper had passed away. They felt it would be a great way to help children not be scared of it.

They forgot to make a way, first, to help me not be scared to watch it with the kids. They didn't, so, I went a little overboard. Okay, a lot.

Pam:

That Danny; he's so sweet. He always tried to protect our girls. But, this was actually a very good time for Sesame Street to air that episode. It wouldn't be shown in normal reruns; just this one time. And, it was at a time when families would be together. It was the perfect time to discuss life, death, and so on. PBS made a point to publicize it.

D.J.:

Mom had had to prod Dad not to leave or interrupt with things off the subject when we'd talk about the birds and the bees later. With this episode, where Big Bird learns that Mr. Hooper died, Dad tried to convince me not to watch Sesame Street that day. I asked, "What happened, did the Cookie Monster get sick eating out of Oscar's

[79] "Daddy's Home," also "Our Very First Episode" - he says Pam always had things running so smoothly.
[80] "A Fish Called Martin" and "Is It True About Stephanie," expanded later in the TV Years

trash can?" It would have been just like Dad to be nervous about that.

"No, Dear," Mom explained. "Your father's just nervous, because it's going to be about something Daddy doesn't like to think about." She went on to say Mr. Hooper had passed away; that's the name many viewers knew him by. He was a grandfatherly person who was always so nice.

Dad called the station and asked if they were sure they wanted to air it; they assured him that it would be done very tastefully, and it would really be about life, not just Mr. Hooper's death. Dad finally relented.

Joey:

We were all there watching. I cried when Susan told Big Bird, "Mr. Hooper's not coming back." Danny and Pam did, too; Stephanie was taking her afternoon nap, before dinner. D.J. was teary but also interested in talking; how did he die, for instance. Danny said it was a heart attack; and that he didn't suffer; we weren't sure how the actor died, and Danny didn't want her thinking about really long illnesses. Jesse was there, too; he promised in front of everyone not to do any more death-defying stunts.

D.J. was at the perfect age, 6.5, for this to be very meaningful. It was done in a way she could appreciate and get lots of information on as she and Danny and Pam talked over the next days and weeks. Which makes sense, since that was Big Bird's age by this time; he was originally said to be four, I think, but then they aged him a bit so he was more of a leader. Looking back, maybe this is when they chose to do that.

Either way, it helped D.J. to mature, and to be able to grasp it better when Pam died, so she could help Steph. For now, though, the best thing, when she worried about that, was to promise that nothing should happen to her parents. But, if something did, that they had made sure she would always be cared for, no matter what.

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3. By Any Other Name – 1984

Jesse - February 12, 1984 – Pondering a new name:

The Olympics were in Los Angeles, and Papouli wrote and said he was coming to visit us, too. I was so excited; I hadn't seen him in seven years. He'd taken such good care of me in Greece, and of course when I was little. Now, I needed even more help.

You see, as the Rippers and I traveled around to local clubs, there was a real problem. Nobody knew how to say "Katsopolis," let alone spell it. So, there was no way to get name recognition for Jesse Katsopolis and the Rippers." Like with other stars, I figured I had to get a stage name.

If it was just my dad, I might have just changed my name altogether. He kept bugging me to work for him. I'd tried my hand at exterminating, and he said I'd done a good job. But, it just didn't interest me like music did.

I had Papouli to think about, though. How would he feel if I went with a stage name, and quit my father's business? It might break the poor man's heart.

I didn't know how to approach it. But, Danny and Pam helped me write him a few days later, explaining what I wanted to do and why it was important; we figured that was easier than a phone call, much more thought out and way less expensive.

Papouli - Feb. 27:

I knew my son would be angry. I replied that any stage name should be something near and dear to Nick's heart. I also advised Jesse that he should promise to drop the name after a while. It could just be "Jesse and the Rippers," without the last name, and he could go back to Katsopolis.[81] Finally, I said he should pledge to return to his father's employment if music didn't work out. If he promised these three things, I told him I would write personally to Nick and explain the situation, and support Jesse on it.

Danny - March 16:

Jesse couldn't believe it - he raced over from his apartment to show us the mail. Papouli gave more support than he dreamed.[82] I was really disappointed the station had assigned me to Los Angeles covering the Olympics for a few weeks. While Papouli and Gina would go to a few Olympic events after having stopped in San Francisco at the start of the Games, I'd be way too busy, and the crowds way too big, for them to find me. But, from this and all that Pam had said, I knew he was a wonderful person.

Jesse - Mar. 21 – Why Cochrane as a stage name?:[83]

I chose my mother's first husband's name, Cochrane. I figured Dad would be okay with that, though he and Mom fought a lot sometimes - definitely not happy, though. The second was easy; I hadn't even thought of it. The third was the hardest. As I thought about it, though, I liked it. What did "work out" mean? I could play for a while, even while working with Dad, and quit when I wanted. Of course, Dad figured "work out" meant I had to work for him unless I became another Frank Sinatra, but we never talked about what each other meant on anything by this time.

I agreed to those terms. In return, Papouli told me when he'd be sending his letter to Dad. Pam and I were there, while a sitter watched the girls and Danny worked.

Pam - April 19:

Jesse had told Dad when a letter came from Papouli, he wanted to be there with him when he opened it. Dad figured it was about their pending visit; he even joked that Jesse was too anxious for Elena to come.

Jesse and I got there, and then told of Jesse's plans and promises before Dad opened it. Mom and I helped make sure Dad would stay calm before reading the letter. And, when he read it, well, he was a little upset. But, that's all.

Papouli:

Along with announcing my support of Jesse, I spoke of the hardships of war, and how I suffered for my country and my children. I spoke of Jesse's obvious love of music when he came in 1977. Finally, I spoke of his dream, the same dream that caused many to come to America. And, I said that no matter how foolish Nick may think it is, I had

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[81] Removing it from the band, too, heavily implies a stage name.

[82] Though Jesse's comment in "The Last Dance" about Papouli taking care of him refers to the time when he was little, there must be other things he'd remember more vividly to be able to say that, since he'd be so young when Papouli was in America. This is an obvious one.

[83] The actor wanted a name change to reflect his Greek heritage, but a reason must exist for the character, who is different from the actor. After all, some actor's wishes have no bearing on the story being told. The character is totally independent, and needs a separate reason within the story. This one is not only quite plausible, with Jesse it was almost bound to happen.

fought bravely so that boys like Jesse would be free to pursue their dreams. I also added a few stories of interest from my life in Pompadoris. They often provided very valuable moral lessons, as Jesse remembered well.

I was very pleased, when we came, to find that Nick was not very upset that Jesse went by Cochrane. And, Gina and I got to hear Jesse Cochrane and the Rippers.

D.J. - July 28:

I loved meeting Papouli. Steph didn't remember him by 1990, but he had pictures of us that we'd send him. Since Dad missed them this time, he offered to put them up the next time they visited. Papouli promised to come for their 50th anniversary.[84]

That, of course, got Dad thinking about an office when he returned, since another baby would mean the guest bedroom would be gone, anyway.

Pam - July 30:

When Danny called, and we talked, I though an office in the fourth bedroom was great. Danny could be here a little more often, and the attic could be finished and turned into a wonderful guest bedroom or even a place for Jesse. I'd worried about him; we offered to let him stay as long as he needed provided he not bring any women who would not be good for impressionable young girls. Especially because a very impressionable girl showed up at our door the day before Papouli and Gina left for Los Angeles.

Kimmy - July 31 – Meeting D.J., Cream Spinch Not Ice Cream, Meeting Papouli, etc.:

D.J. and I had known each other since about six months into Kindergarten.[85] One of my first times over, D.J.'s mom was feeding Steph creamed spinach; I called it ice cream – it was the first of a number of cool discoveries I'd had with them.

Their mom pulled out some real ice cream then and offered me some. It looked a lot different and tasted a lot different, too. She decided my parents had probably just not wanted to bother setting a limit on it, and told me to ask if I could at least have it over there if I couldn't with them. They said "yes."

So, they'd trusted Pam a lot. I think they were glad to have someone else to watch out for me. I'd ride my bike over there fairly often.

I rode my bike there this time because I wanted to meet these people from Greece. I shook Papouli's hand, and said, "Hey, your hands aren't slippery with grease at all. Mrs. Tanner must have made you take a bath and wash all your grease off before you came."

Then, he explained there was a country called Greece. It was right next to Turkey. I told him, "That makes sense. When we cook a turkey, a lot of grease winds up next to it." Then, D.J. just showed me up to her room.

Pam – First Thoughts About Kimmy, Why Gibblers Start Staying in One Place:

When D.J. played "Yankee Doodle," Kimmy waved the flag at inopportune times. Once, she even hollered backstage, "Hey, Deej, what's my line again?" during a scene. I couldn't put my finger on it, but something was, well, odd about her.

She and her family lived in an apartment just inside the border of where kids would attend our local grade school. Five years was their record for living in one place

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[84] "Greek Week," Jesse introduces Danny as father of his great-grandchildren, as if Papouli met the girls.

[85] "The First Day of Kindergarten," they only talked about six months after that first day

before the landlord made them move because of the mess they would make.[86] I talked to them about owning a home, but never dreamed they'd afford our neighborhood; though later we'd wonder if they were richer than they ever let on with all their travelling. Our neighborhood was several blocks of really nice homes.

They would, however, when Grandpa Gibbler died. A small fortune in stock certificates was discovered. He'd disliked the products, so he used the stock to line his dressers and forgot it existed, thinking it worthless. They kept the outside up well once they came next door, and the inside respectable. When you own something you do tend to take more pride in it, I think. That's why they did okay next door.

I warned D.J. not to let Kimmy steer her into any trouble, because a kid who rides her bike all over at age seven could get into it if she wasn't careful. But, at the same time, I encouraged her to be the leader I knew she could be to help Kimmy.

D.J. – Kimmy's weirdness, teasing, Pam helping:

Mom understood Kimmy - wait, let me correct that. Mom understood what she needed. Even I didn't always understand Kimmy. Dad just found Kimmy too weird, especially when Steph got a tieout once and Kimmy mentioned that her parents stuck them to something with Velcro. He put up with her, but erred far more on the side of caution. Mom just insisted Kimmy be respectful when visiting. She was till after Mom died, then she got into weirder habits. Still, I watched, and usually, neither she nor our family felt hurt by each others' teasing. If someone went too far, it was usually Kimmy. Still, we all took jokes quite easily.

Mom and Dad didn't let me go to Kimmy's for a while, even for birthday parties that never came within two weeks of each other, and were sometimes in different months. She wasn't sure how much supervision Kimmy had there The Gibblers did whatever, whenever they felt like it, at times. Kimmy was the same way.

Once I got over how weird she could be, I was a friend out of compassion. As we grew closer, though, we had fun doing things together, and I forgot all about being a friend merely to help her, though I still did plenty of that.

When they finally moved here, it was after various talks about owning a home and what it meant. Mom also discussed ways to encourage Kimmy more. But, she didn't push too hard, she didn't want to scare them away from our help. She said just enough that they became respectable neighbors. But, more importantly, she showed them that we were the type of family they could trust Kimmy with.

Pam - Aug. 15, 1984:

Things were going very well for our family. Danny called every night from Los Angeles, and earned lots of extra money. D.J. was a born leader. Stephanie was well behaved for a child her age, though she still kicked or slapped a little when angry. I'd taught her well to use her words, though, and she did, as much as a very good child of 2.5 can do. I wouldn't allow hitting in this house. Within months, she'd always be saying "How rude" instead of hurting anyone.

Now, all that remained would be to see what Danny did with that bonus from the Olympic broadcasts - put an office in, or save it for other purposes?

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[86] The Trouble With Danny

POINT OF DIVERGENCE

Narrator:

Great baseball player Yogi Berra once said, while giving directions, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." We're at the fork, the Point of Divergence between TV and Book Universe, where the Book Universe separates. Of course, you'll see some post-series TV Universe happenings are from books that are closest to the TV Universe in character, so they shed additional light on what happens post-series.

We'll take that fork by exploring both. First, we'll trek through the universe most know, the TV one. After the TV and post-TV stories, we'll pick it up from here. In the book universe you'll see: 1. Michelle and Stephanie much more polite and well behaved, and better role models; 2. Jesse in the attic from the start, and Joey in the basement, as they are in books; 3. D.J., not Jesse, as mother figure in the books with Jesse being in the attic; and, of course, what starts it all, 4. An office in that fourth bedroom.

Some special sequences await you in the Book Universe section. However, for now, back to the TV Universe.

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4. Mom Upside-Down is Wow - Sept. 1984-Nov. '86

Danny – Bundles of Energy – Sept., 1984:

The thing about having a kid like Stephanie was, she didn't stay in one place long. She was constantly trying to talk, too, but you couldn't understand a lot of her words yet.

Thankfully, D.J. could help a little. "I can translate," she piped up proudly as Stephanie grew frustrated that we couldn't understand. D.J. put her book down and came over to us in the backyard. "When she swings her arm around it means something's flying around her. 'Dat' means that; that one's pretty easy." We agreed. "She probably saw a bee, because she's saying 'noise,' that one's a little trickier."

"I guess it makes sense. You know, you used to be that little once," I said.

D.J. looked a little annoyed that I'd bring that up, but was very good at not saying anything, especially with Pam there, as she'd taught her well the importance of being nice and respectful. "Don't tell anyone, okay?"

"Well, we're glad you can still help," Pam remarked. "Stephanie, did you want to try and go potty?" We were starting to work on training her. Stephanie nodded.

I grinned as Pam and Stephanie went in the back door. "I wonder where that bee was she saw? Probably around where Steph spilled some juice earlier."

"I thought I heard it, too," D.J. said as I felt something flying up my shorts; it was still pretty warm in early September, as that's around the warmest part of the year in the Bay Area. It doesn't start getting chilly till October. "Dad, what is it?" Before I knew it, I was down on the ground shaking my legs up in the air like crazy. "Are you okay?" she asked with a mixture of shock, concern, and confusion. I told her I was fine; I was just trying to get the bee out of my shorts.[87]

Finally, it was out. "Phew. Well, at least it wasn't one of you girls. Bet you didn't know I could move like that, huh?"

"That was certainly…interesting. Can I offer some advice?" I said she could. "Let's not tell Kimmy this. She might try to do that on purpose." I agreed, and said I was

[87] "Dr. Dare Rides Again" mentions that this happened

proud of her for taking the lead in keeping Kimmy from being even odder.

Joey – Thu., Jan., 17, 1985 – Birthdays and Super Bowls:

Pam was very involved in the girls' lives; it was wonderful to see them develop. Stephanie had a little party with her friends today. She was born just in time in 1982; Danny had to fly out to Pontiac to cover the 49ers in the Super Bowl right after that. Pam hadn't been nervous, it wasn't common then for the dad to be present, but Danny had been; he always wanted to be there. Now, he was actually busier, because the 49ers were playing nearby in Palo Alto, less than half an hour away from San Francisco.

To avoid confusion it always seemed better to have a separate party for family. Danny was at that party, as he'd promised. But, we had it at one of the oddest times; 9:00 Saturday morning. That way, it would be right before he went in to work, and he could be there for the whole thing. The game would be the following evening.

Pam organized both, and did a great job. She used me to help, of course, my comedy was always a hit, and I could tailor it to any age level.

By the time the 49ers were in their other Super Bowls, Danny was working on a talk show, but still had football-themed stuff, so he had a bit more work at times.

Pam - November 8, 1985:

"We've got the best we could ever ask for," Danny said as we cuddled under the covers. D.J. and Stephanie were snug in their beds; or so we thought. D.J. was going to be reading for 15 minutes or so, of course; then, it was lights out. And as for us? We were thinking of having another little one, if the time was right.

I sighed contentedly. "You're right, Danny. We had our problems in the beginning, but we made it through. And now?" I closed my eyes and muttered, "We need to enjoy them while they're young. D.J.'s mother-daughter slumber party is tomorrow night. And, when she gets a bit older, she'll start to cut those apron strings a little. She'll think of her first slumber party as when she goes to one without me."[88]

"I know, isn't it amazing. Soon, they'll be in college, getting married…oh my goodness." He looked a little lightheaded. "Honey…I'm not ready for that. I just now got used to letting D.J. pick her own clothes. I mean, before, I would give her a choice, I'd say, 'You may try these two on, and then choose,' after all that's how kids learn to make choices, things like that. I guess we've done pretty well."

Just then, we heard little knocks at the door. "Who is it?" I asked gently as I rose and put on a bathrobe, though Danny was still in pajamas, and I in my nightgown.

"Your rays of sunshine," D.J. joked as I opened the door. She could tell it looked like she'd interrupted, though I hadn't yet locked it. "You know, if Dad had put that office in the guest bedroom, I could have just entertained Stephanie in there."

"Stephanie, what are you doing up?" I asked our three-year-old.

"I want to read."

I was so proud of Stephanie. She wasn't quite four, and yet she was interested in reading. "Honey, it's not time to read, it's time for bed."

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[88] Hence the difference between the one she almost went to in "A Pox in Our House" and this, mentioned in "Slumber Party." She sees herself as more grown up two years later, and doesn't think of the one with her mom as a slumber party. Not only that, recalling the one with her mom would have made her sad about missing Pam, so she chose not to in that first season episode.

"That's what I told her. She must have picked something up from some doctor show on TV, though. She said she wanted a second opinion," D.J. explained.

I couldn't help but laugh. "Well, the second opinion is that you need your sleep," I said. I led them into Stephanie room. D.J. sat on a chair as I sat on the bed and gently rubbed Stephanie's back. "We had such fun today."

"D.J. told me your name upside-down," Stephanie said as she closed her eyes, though she wasn't yet sleepy.

"Upside-down? You mean with the letters backward?"

"No, upside-down," Stephanie insisted.

I was curious; obviously I was missing something. "What do you mean?"

"Mom, Steph was holding a book upside down, and the word was 'Mom,' but the way Steph was holding it, it looked like 'Wow.' And, it's true; 'wow' is part of you," she finished proudly.

"I want to read like that," Stephanie pleaded.

D.J. – Stephanie struggling, then learning to read:

I tried to explain. "Well, that's not quite how you read. Letters have to be right side up. I was just joking about 'Mom' and 'wow' - they just seem to go together." Stephanie agreed. "I'll show you tomorrow, okay?" She consented reluctantly.

We sang "On Top of Spaghetti," as Stephanie got sleepy. We loved that song, though "You Are My Sunshine" was also a favorite – that was Steph's special song, like "My Girl" was for me. Then, we discussed the party Mom would take me to, and the fun Steph would have with Dad that evening. After a few minutes, she was asleep.

I wanted to be the best big sister in the world. Mom really encouraged me to do that. By the time Stephanie was almost four, I was pretty much over my frustration at not being the center of attention. Of course, she was still in my stuff a lot, something Mom tried to manage. But, for the most part, we got along pretty well.

I decided part of being that great big sister was helping her read. I was so excited that she wanted to learn. But, I made the mistake of pushing her too hard. I wanted her reading 'The Cat in the Hat' by Christmas, and it just wasn't going to happen. Because of that, Stephanie lost interest till a couple months after she turned four.

She picked it up again with Mom, though. And, by spring, she could read simple words. I was glad to help, but something else drew my attention - Kimmy and I were becoming very close.

Danny – Dec. 23 - Kimmy Loses a Letter:

One of our first encounters with just how strange Kimmy could be occurred today. The girls celebrated having off from school by playing over here. In the middle, Kimmy recalled that Stephanie had stopped trying to learn to read for a few months.

"Hey, squirt," Kimmy said as Stephanie wheeled a doll into the living room in her stroller, changing its diaper and clothes while we spoke. "You made the right choice not reading yet. Soon we'll be down to 25 letters. You'd have to learn all over again."

D.J. looked strangely at Kimmy and asked the question Pam and I both had. "Kimmy, what on Earth are you talking about?"

"It's true, Deej. All those people sing 'Noel.' Then, this girl moves into our school, and what's her name? Noelle. Her mom wants to run for city council."

"I'm not following," D.J. said.

Pam couldn't help but giggle. "I'm sure she's just making some silly joke, Dear."

"No, I'm serious, Mrs. Tanner. The signs are everywhere. No L. Pretty soon, that girl's parents are going to run things. And, the letter 'L' will be history." She noted our skeptical looks. "Of course, you Tanners will have it easy. My name will be Gibber, though. In fact, each name in my full name will lose an 'L.'"

I hesitated to say anything, but decided I should, just in case she believed that. "Kimmy, I think the name Noelle is French."

"Really? Why are we letting other languages decide how many letters we have?"

"We won't," D.J. piped up. "Honest, hard working Americans will always make sure there are 26 letters in the alphabet." She turned to Pam and me and shrugged. "It's the easiest way to talk to her sometimes," D.J. stated softly, sounding more mature than most girls of her eight years and ten months, as she sometimes did. Pam agreed.

"That's a relief. Wait a minute, though. That means I won't be able to use that as an excise for not understanding spelling anymore."

"You mean…you already used it once?" I said in disbelief.

"Only once. The teacher said the same thing. I thought she'd been tricked."

"You know, I'm sure with some tutoring you could really improve your spelling, and feel a lot better about yourself," Pam said gently. "I would help tutor you." It was the kind of offer she tended to make; she was such a giving person.

"No, thanks, Mrs. Tanner. I don't want to stretch my brain too far."

That evening, after the kids were in bed, I remarked to Pam, "Kimmy seems a bit lazier than she did in second grade."

"I know. But, trust me, Danny, she'll be okay. D.J. will take her under her wing, I'm sure. And, if it wasn't for the fact they lived further away from us, I might convince her to get help," she said optimistically. "It's not going to be easy I'll admit."

"No. You're right, though. She really does look up to D.J.. Maybe someday, that will translate into looking up to you, too." Sadly, about half a year after the Gibblers moved next door, Pam was dead, and unable to exert the influence she could have with Kimmy over here so much more.

Joey – Feb. 9, 1986 – Steph Borrowing D.J.'s Clothes, and Danny Doting on Steph:

Today was D.J.'s birthday. Stephanie, now four, was happy with her own toys. Danny looked at me as we got D.J.'s cake decorated. "Joey, I've got a Cookie Monster puppet in my sock drawer," he told me in a hushed tone.

"Thanks, Danny, but really, I'm a lot more into cartoons than Sesame Street."

"I mean for Stephanie," Danny said with a chuckle. "Remember D.J.'s party last year? Steph had just turned three, and cried because D.J. got all the gifts. She couldn't understand, so I got her a doll. The Christmas she was two, a few months earlier, I gave her one of my gifts because she was so excited. She tore through her presents so fast she was out of them when D.J. was only half way through."[89]

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[89] "Two For One Christmas Fun," a TV Universe book. Background info like this is in both universes, but Stephanie is too jealous of Allie and they split too fast for lifelong friends. But, it's just right for Steph and Gia. Also, Danny is a bit too much of a neat freak compared to book norm. "Family history" should be considered to have book events happen with Gia and Stephanie in the TV Universe, and the family Secret Santa not done. That is, unless one favors "Merry Christmas, World" – actions are like TV Michelle – for the TVU. ("My Ho-Ho-Horrible Christmas" is clearly much more like book characters, as you'll see.)

I nodded. “She thought your necktie was a bow and tried to wear it.”

“Is it ready yet?” Pam asked excitedly as she rushed into the kitchen. I went into the living room as Danny nodded. They lit the candles, and soon we were all singing “Happy Birthday To You” to D.J.. “Make a wish,” the excitement machines, Pam and Stephanie, shouted at the same time. D.J. did, and blew them out.

Danny looked a bit disappointed, though, once D.J. had all her gifts. “Danny, what has you so down?” I asked as we cleaned up the kitchen.

“Aw, Joey, Stephanie was fine today. She didn’t need the present I bought her.”

“Well, Danny, she is four now. She’s growing up.”

“I know. I just love to shower her with good things. I wish she’d stay little. But, pretty soon, she’ll be going to school, going to friends’ houses, dating, then the prom. One day she’ll be married. She’ll move out and never call or write.”

I held up a hand. “Whoa, Danny. Writing, I can see, but this girl has your gift of gab; she will always call. In fact, you will have to pay her to stop calling.”

I made Danny laugh, as always. “Thanks, man.” He patted my shoulder. “You’re right. And, there will still be fun, even when she has her own life, separate from us.”

I assured him there would be. At that moment, D.J. came into the kitchen asking Danny to come into the room. She was upset, but Pam was giggling, and Danny quickly said, “Awww, isn’t that the cutest thing you’ve ever seen? Joey, you know where the camera is, right?” I fetched it while D.J. complained that Stephanie was wearing her clothes, and had stuffed them with tissue paper so they fit on her body. He snapped several pictures, as he would other times Stephanie did this.

Danny didn’t heed D.J.’s complaints; he simply said that they needed to enjoy Stephanie while she was young, as he gave her a big hug. Danny loved to shower love on all the girls, and always would. Pam and I simply told D.J. to get used to it, and Pam helped her think of times when she’d been the center of attention. She finally agreed; the birthday had been a lot of fun; Jesse had even shown up on his motorcycle and dropped something off for her. D.J. was starting to learn to share the glory some, at least.

Pam – Mar, 1, 1986 – Cousin Steve Visits:

Danny’s older sister’s son, Steve, came out with her to visit us. His younger sister, Wendy, wished she could make it, as he’d enjoyed hearing about her trips to Africa. Steve’s parents were having problems. Steve’s dad already considered moving out of the home, and soon would. He and his mom eventually went back to her maiden name of Tanner. I was so glad we had such fun together. He went skating with D.J. yesterday[90] at an indoor skating rink, and today we had a cookout.

D.J.:

I enjoyed Steve. He tried to do the things I enjoyed. I didn’t have close cousins. Dad had siblings, but we only saw each other at family reunions or rare times like this.

Kathy Santoni and Kimmy were over, too. Kathy seemed to have a crush on him. Kimmy and I teased her, leading to a fun pillow fight. We laughed so much, it was great. Still, it seemed strange for her to have a crush already. We were both only nine.

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[90] “Just One of the Guys,’ Steve clearly comes from a much older sibling, but Danny says Steve’s dad moved out, not Danny’s brother. Also, if a Tanner moved out, Steve would be less likely to come out to see someone from that side of the family. So, Danny had an older sister who is Steve’s mom.

I didn't think crushes started that young. Mom said everyone matured differently, and Kathy just had to be careful and keep her passions under control. It was a good chance to talk more about the facts of life. Well, actually, it was a chance for Mom to talk while Dad fidgeted and kept asking if I'd heard enough.

Kimmy - Mar. 28, 1986:

D.J. and I went with the rest of our class to an amusement park before spring break. D.J. ate too much or something and threw up, [91] but I helped her feel better. D.J. understood I had a weird streak. I told her the best part was the looks on other kids' faces when she threw up on a ride; I thought it was hilarious. How this one boy got grossed out was great. He tried so hard to gross girls out, and yet when D.J. did that…well, D.J. would probably suggest that I should just let you envision it, so I'll stop.

D.J. – Friends to Best Friends:

That or when I sat next to her in her bacon and eggs scarf on a trip to Fisherman's Wharf was the start of our becoming best friends: Dad considered the start when Mom died and Kimmy was there for me, though it was really cemented when she moved next door.[92] Either way, it took a while to know each other. At first I felt like a big sister. I stopped her from slacking off a lot, though she still stuffed her cheeks to fake the mumps and skip school.[93] She once told the teacher she was abducted by aliens and taken to a distant planet when she hadn't done her homework. And, seriously, Joey never even stuck his hand in a beehive to get honey like Kimmy at age seven. It gave new meaning to her being in the Honeybees, that's for sure.

By this time, we were forming a lifelong bond. It continued through the spring and summer, as we discussed hopes and dreams. We hadn't done much but play together before, but now, Kimmy and I really started to share secrets and do other cool things.

Despite her weirdness, Kimmy and I never did anything really bad, but one time Kimmy caused a bunch of juice to spill all over in a store. That big mess, combined with a big food fight we'll mention later, is why I sometimes joked about Dad blocking out 1989 when he thought about how long we'd been best friends.[94]

Danny - May 1 – Learning Pam's pregnant with Michelle, Steph's Sensitivity:

I didn't think about D.J. and Kimmy much - I was working quite a bit. I didn't find her that annoying at first. Even after they moved next door, it wasn't bad, and before I knew it, Kimmy would be D.J.'s support through Pam's death and all that followed.

The girls had a great bond with their mom. When Pam told me she was pregnant with a third child, due in November, we were all ecstatic. Steph was so excited, she started jumping and shouting, "Oh boy, I'm gonna be…I'm gonna be…" Then, she finally turned to D.J. and asked, "D.J., what am I gonna be?!"

"A big sister," D.J. replied. "Now you'll have someone to hang around with

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[91] "Good News, Bad News"

[92] "Birthday Blues," Danny says they'd been best friends six years, thinking of when Pam died and Kimmy was there. Like many friendships it took time to develop. They were friends since Kindergarten; by D.J.'s thinking, it was seven, since Kimmy moved next door. The "Fuller Hosue" series mentions the trip.

[93] "Good new, Bad News"

[94] "Birthday Blues" – While it could be a straight joke with no reference to anything, something like this is quite plausible, and the mess would be something he'd want to forget.

instead of me," she said practically, though Pam reminded them the baby wouldn't be able to play much for a while. Pam was just as excited as Steph, if not more so.

We loved having kids around; it really kept me young. Pam did a super job as an at-home mom. She hadn't babysat regularly since I graduated college, but she hosted a toddler playgroup for kids Stephanie's age; well, most were a bit younger.[95] We knew no matter what, she'd be able to help this new baby grow, and encourage D.J. and Steph to be great role models, just like she was helping D.J. do with Kimmy. Steph was already showing some real sensitivity toward others.

Joey – This Pregnancy Compared to Others:

Pam had been a little leery, being so young and pregnant with D.J.. It was stunning to think she was having a baby at eighteen, though she and Danny were married, at least. She had a fair amount of babysitting experience; that's another thing that kept her occupied at times when Jesse drove their parents crazy. But, it's a lot different when you can't send the kids home after a while like a sitter. Or, when you can't threaten to shove carrots up their nose as a last resort.

Danny and Pam were a lot more confident by the time Stephanie was conceived, of course. They might have had Michelle earlier, but it's good they waited to have Steph till Danny was out of college, considering their financial problems.Plus the age gap seemed right to let them give more indivual attention to each dhiler and let the oldest one help more when they got a bit older if they were mature enough.

Pam felt very confident that they'd be good parents by the time Steph came into the world. Danny had a steady and good income, and she hadn't even had to baby-sit anymore. D.J. had been ambivalent then, though.

It was during Pam's pregnancy with Steph that I perfected my Wizard of Oz routine. It was to help D.J. overcome sadness at not being the only child; D.J. was concerned about how much time she and Pam would have together once the baby was born; I think lots of kids worry about that if you wait that long.

Everyone loved the way I helped. I did the voice of baby Michelle inside Pam, just as I had baby Stephanie for D.J.. I'd ask if anyone wanted to "talk to the baby," and had the baby say things like, "I never have to worry about a diaper; it's all water in here." D.J. would be amused, and ask a question or two, but Steph would join in right away and "talk to" baby Michelle all the time. Of course, we'd remind her that the baby wouldn't remember any of this, but Steph didn't mind. She just wanted to have fun. It took us a few minutes of encouraging for D.J. to get into stuff like that.

Still, D.J. had learned to have fun, and was warming to the baby, as long as people weren't too excited about how cute she was. She liked the idea of being able to earn money watching them when they got a bit older, and she was mature enough that she could if she wanted.

Pam - June 23, 1986 – Glad D.J. Taking Lead With Kimmy:

As spring and summer came and went, I could tell there was a real kinship between D.J. and Kimmy. But, more importantly, my hopes were realized. Kimmy wasn't leading D.J. astray. Instead, D.J. was being the leader I'd hoped she would.

I still caught them before they were going to do a few little things they shouldn't,

[95] "Joey's Place," Jesse hosts it in her place, but the kids all are closer to Steph's age

but D.J. was thankful, and confessed right away. I saw it as my helping to build her conscience so she could steer Kimmy away from bad things better. And, it wasn't that bad, the worst was when Kimmy got D.J. to collect all our toilet paper. They planned to cover some trees and maybe Danny's car with it. D.J., Kimmy, and I had a long talk, and they never did it; I made sure with some follow-up talks.

Still, it was a good, healthy friendship like I wanted for my girls. The Gibblers announced their move, and I was genuinely happy for Kimmy. We lived in a suburban neighborhood very close to Danny's work in San Francisco. It was in the metropolitan area yet a nice, smaller city. It helped keep them out of trouble.[96]

D.J.:

Kimmy bugged her folks to move here for months. It didn't seem possible; they wore old, bargain clothes, and Kimmy dressed in wild, 1970s things even after their move. Still, her dad's father died today, and it turned out he was rich. It was the strangest thing - I couldn't imagine how anyone could have so much money and not know it. The way they travelled, as it turned out, maybe they'd had more money than I thought. They had lots of sitters, Kimmy told me once.

When they made arrangements, they dropped Kimmy off here; Garth was with another friend. We cried together and talked about her memories. Steph didn't know Kimmy well, but she talked so much we called her Motormouth Tanner. It was so cute when she said "How rude" one of her first times - to Kimmy once, when she was three and Kimmy removed her socks. Steph said it to me a fair amount, too.

Anyway, as I said, Steph was okay with Kimmy then, except Kimmy teased a little, though they weren't on each other's nerves as much as when she moved here.

He died in June. The first house in the area to go up for sale after that was the one next door. That didn't happen till late fall. They bought it, and Mom talked more about how she hoped they kept up the place. She was so good at those heart-to-heart talks.

Kimmy:

I remember Mrs. Tanner. She was so nice. Their dad was laxer on politeness, so after a while, I called him Mr. T. I liked it there; Mrs. Tanner and the others were special. My parents liked me over there because then I wasn't home. Our parents ignored us quite a bit. They preferred doing their own thing.

The day Grandpa died and my folks dropped me off, I knew there was something special about them. It was something I wanted. I often joked about how warm and fuzzy things were. But, I didn't take time to hear about Mr. T.'s or Joey's parents, or Jesse's dad growing up in Greece, or anything like that.

Pam – Kimmy's parents' weird naming:

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[96] A suburb explains numerous things, yet does not violate show canon. They'd still say San Francisco - it's common to refer to a place by the city nearest it if the "big city" is large enough. "San Francisco" refers to the metropolitan area; the airport, for instance, is not in San Francisco. A smaller city explains D.J. walking a horse through the streets. The girls walk other places safely. Several things named could be Bayview. It can be within easy driving distance of the harbor, work, and everything else. The opening scene is of a San Francisco neighborhood, but the row houses are not like the Tanner home, which is not connected to others, and has a different color door. Lastly, there is no 1800 block of Girard. Placing it in a suburb makes sense; it had to be invented somewhere, based on the last two.

I knew Kimmy was really glad to know D.J.. And, they were, too. They didn't pay much attention to anything but pro wrestling and weird stuff, and while they paid more attention to Kimmy at this point, once Jimmy was born they'd go back to having lots of sitters for him and sending lots of singing telegrams, along with weird things like timeout attached to the wal. Which may have led to Kimmy's widea of making kids smell her feet as a teen; her feet became legendary. [97]

They also had a very strange reason for naming her Kimberly. It sounds perfectly normal and common, butc ommon names didn't fit their style. They couldn't think of a unique girl's name. So, a day after her birth, they brought in a map of the world. Mrs. Gibbler put on a blindfold and threw a dart. It hit on Kimberley, South Africa.. To match their odd style they dropped the second "e."

By now, I was glad we hadn't named D.J. Farrah. And, I'm sure Kimmy would have hated to go around with a name like Athens. Well, okay, Athena might work. But, imagine if the dart had hit in the Atlantic Ocean. Or on Copenhagen.

D.J. - June 26:

I finally got to go over to Kimmy's, because Mom had me come along when we took them a fruit basket. Mom said taking something like that was the proper thing to do for someone who had a close family member die.

Their house looked like one great big garage sale, with all kinds of strange knick-knacks that had little value. In the coming months, Mom emphasized how proud she and Dad were of our place and discussed how we kept our place, with a few little jokes about Dad's zest for cleaning to lighten the mood. She didn't want to sound too pushy, she told me, but at the same time, she wanted to encourage them by bringing up the topic. She said if they ever did move, they would have to keep it up better. I think she got through to them - she showed she really cared, at least.

Mom was awesome in helping Kimmy's parents. I learned to be good to others by her example, and I hoped others would learn by mine. They talked a lot at first when they moved next door, too. Because of this new wealth, they bought, well, more colorful odds and ends; they put things like a disco ball on the ceiling. Mom told Dad jokingly that it looked like the 1970s had exploded, with all that wild color. It helped influence Kimmy's clothing choices, too, later in life.

Over Christmas, Mom offered to help tutor Kimmy again. They thought about it, but things were so busy, and Kimmy wasn't interested. She would have been, and I'd have pushed harder, in fifth grade when they split us into different classes, but you know what happened before then, of course. Still, I like to think Mom had a hand in their being decent neighbors. Things like rollerblading in the living room bothered some, and probably caused part of the damage that needed repaired after the earthquake.[98] It was still untidy, but nothing like what it could have been.

Danny – D.J. influencing Kimmy, talk later about Steph's ears:

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[97] In "Play It Again, Jess" Michelle is scared and runs as Kimmy's sock comes off. Michelle would have heard about it from others, like Brian Kagan. Almost all feel D.J. wouldn't threaten it but handle things herself instead. They're not always smelly early, but she used more foot deodorant at times. The Velcro timeout is from "Fuller House," and the naming idea developed years before "Fuler House," fits their love of travelling and the fact mentioned here if them not being there much for either kid.

[98] "Aftershocks"

Kimmy developed weird habits and thought processes at times because her parents were so unusual – and still a bit lazy, they would name Jimmy because it rhymed with Kimmy However, being around D.J. helped her avoid getting too crazy. I knew she needed someone like D.J.,[99] though I often wished D.J. would be more assertive with her. But, D.J. corrected her at important times, like their long talk when Steph's ears got infected once.[100] She emphasized Kimmy could have said "no" without telling on Steph. Kimmy really had a good heart, apologizing right away. D.J. told her she didn't have to pay by selling her toenail clippings for use in pesticides like Kimmy suggested.

Jesse – D.J. and Pam discussing different families:

D.J. was learning how different people live. You start out your life thinking every family is like yours, which is normal. I mean, what do you have to compare it to? If you've got a father like Danny, you're even more sheltered.

Still, you can't shelter them from everything. Once they go to school, they learn about rough kids, and more difficult situations. D.J. understood rough kids from stories about me, of course. And, she could accept families without as much money were normal because of Kimmy, though of course that wasn't Kimmy's only limitation.

However, some are more difficult to explain, like hitting. Our families never hit as punishment. When they were older Grandma Tanner might have given a playful slap that didn't hurt, like if one of them really scared her.[101] Even that was only a couple times as a reaction, though, and just on the arm. D.J. hadn't heard of it till other kids talked at school. She accepted it was for really bad kids, but she asked Pam, anyway; they had a very close relationship, and she really valued Pam's input into things.

"Well, honey, some people have that philosophy where they do it often. But, Dad and I could never see doing it," Pam said as they sat on the couch one evening.

"I know; it just seems so strange." She held up a finger. "Now, a bad behavior kid, I guess I can see, like Uncle Jesse could be sometimes. But, even that, I don't know."

"We don't do it in our family, that's what's important." She could tell Danny really didn't want D.J. thinking about such things. "Would you like to check on Stephanie?" Pam kidded him. Steph was asleep by this time.

"Actually, yes, that would probably be good. Look, Deej," he added, "we've always believed in talking things out. Some families just do things differently."

"Does it bother you?"

"Well, no, Mom, it doesn't bother me to hear about it. I just figure the child's loved, no matter what," D.J. asserted. "And, love is what's important."

Danny patted her on the head as he rose to go upstairs. "That's a good way to think." He knew it wasn't always done in love, but also that we wanted to protect D.J. from hearing about the really rough kind of people, if we could.

Once Danny went upstairs, Pam said, "It really hurts the feelings. I like how you think of it as just for those 'bad behavior kids,' if nothing else works." D.J. nodded. "I have to confess, your dad and I talked about what it would be like to have a kid like that.

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[99] "Under the Influence"

[100] "I'm Not D.J."

[101] "Granny Tanny" – Danny says he has really bad news & tells her he hates brussel sprouts; she gives a little reaction slap on the arm, but not on purpose; and, as mentioned, it's canon Danny never does that in both TV and books; same with the others.

I think you can imagine just a few love pats like this would hurt a kid's feelings." Pam patted her own knee lightly. D.J. nodded. "That's all that we'd do. And, the kid would have to be so far out of control, I can't see it ever happening with our family."

"I agree, Mom. Sometimes when a kid's acting really mean and stuff, I think to myself, if only that kid had you as parents. Then things would be a lot better."

Pam knew the teen years could be tough, but the girls were still at the age where they thought their mother was perfect; they were really at ages where they would miss Pam most of all. "I don't know about that. Some of it's just how the kid's made, like your Uncle Jesse. But, some of it is in how you raise them. I'm just glad you understand the most important thing with any child is unconditional love."

Pam - July 4, 1986:

We had a great family cookout for the Fourth. But, as usual, Jesse didn't come. He had lots of things to do himself, I guess. Or, at least, lots of ladies to go out with.

Danny's mom worked at a place in Tacoma that was having problems. Danny had tried to urge her to come back to the area - he figured his dad could get part-time work anywhere. Plus, at his age, Danny was concerned about his health

D.J. – Granny Tanner's Moves, Nick Passing the Business On to a Boy, Cousins:

Grandma Tanner transferred to a store in Seattle once Grandpa Tanner passed away, to try to forget about it. She bought a townhouse, like the one in Tacoma.

She'd spent wonderful years here, but her home was still Connecticut - she'd only been in California around ten years before moving, hence she was reluctant to come live near us. It wasn't home like New England was. Still, she moved down here for a while before moving back to where she'd been born and raised.

Grandpa Nick said he hoped Uncle Jesse started to settle down, or he'd have to teach me the extermination business. He'd never have thought of passing it on to a girl, though; he grew up where men did all that kind of work.[102] I knew it was a joke, but thanks to Kimmy, I had lost the real hatred of bugs and such that some girls have.

I laughed and said, "Grandpa, that's not the worst part. I don't have any cousins here, either." Of course, a couple of Dad's siblings had provided me with cousins. But, I just didn't think about them very much, since they were so much further away.

Pam – Jul. 10 – No preschool for Stephanie:

We were so fortunate to have such a precocious young girl. Danny brought up the possibility of preschool. "They do have good programs now," he contended, "and with the playgroup I know she'd be ready for a couple hours a day."

"That's true; but do we want to? I mean, I know you want what's best for our girls, Danny, and preschool is starting to become more common than it was five years ago, when D.J. was this age. But, I really like having that time with her."

"We could find an afternoon one, so she can do that instead of the playgroup." Danny sighed. "I just don't want to see you strain yourself with the pregnancy, and then the new baby; I know you'll be busy."

"I know. Danny, it's great that you think of me, but I really value the time with

[102] "It's Not My Job," part of that would be keeping the family name on the business, but not totally. He laments that Jesse was his only hope, as if Pam could have produced a grandson that would.

Stephanie, too." I had to admit, "She certainly does have a lot of energy."

"I'll say. We have a few weeks to think."

"I know, you've seen me helping her read and do other things, and you think maybe it would help her go even faster. But, she's going to need time to herself, too; at times I fear childhood might become too structured. They've even started one class of full-day Kindergarten at Fraser St. now."

"They'll always have half day, too, it just offers more choices. It's good for working parents." Danny reminded me of D.J.'s imaginary friend. "D.J. will be at school; I just wonder if Stephanie will get too lonely with you busy with the baby. I know she can play by herself very well; all you have to do is sit there and watch when she plays ballerina, anyway; I'm sure she'll be going to dance class soon and you'll be going for milkshakes and whatever afterward and…okay I'm going to stop worrying about her growing up too fast."[103] He couldn't help but chuckle. "I know; I'm the overprotective one among us. Maybe we can ask Steph if she's ready."

"Tell you what, Danny; let's try it with the playgroup for a while; the other moms will have to take my turn, anyway, for a few months before and after the baby's born. We'll try a few activities that will help them learn while they're playing, too. But, mothers were able to handle it long before television and other entertainment. We've never just sat our kids in front of a TV to try and entertain them."

"Not unless you count how we handle Joey when we're busy," Danny kidded, as much to hear my laugh as anything; he always said how it filled the house with joy. And, it was true; Joey did pop in unexpectedly on rare occasions.

We wound up working things out to help the playgroup become more educational for Steph in small ways, and we agreed to think about it in the spring if we felt it was needed. Stephanie loved to learn, and the couple hours a day in the playgroup was very good for her. However, she never went to preschool. I always had lots of energy, and was very good at entertaining children. A couple hours each day, voluntary, would have been okay; like the playgroup, really. But, I'm really glad I had the extra time. Having children really gives you wings, to soar with them as they learn and grow.

Joey – Oct. 16, 1986 – The Girls' Pen Pals:

D.J. was excited to have a pen pal; she loved making friends, and always tried to be the best. She kept writing for a couple years, but sadly, hers stopped then, which is understandable because not all kids in fourth and fifth grade keep in touch well.

Kimmy had a pen pal for a while, too, but hers felt she was too weird. Kimmy asked questions about rollerblading in the house and such, and after the initial interest piqued by Kimmy moving into a new home and everything, Kimmy's pen pal just said they would stop writing, unless she had a need for comedy.

Actually, Kimmy's spelling hadn't been that great, either, and when the pen pal said she didn't want to hear about the goofy things her parents did, all she talked about was D.J.. I think hers even wrote D.J. a couple times after that, but no more.

Steph was so excited when she started to get letters from hers; they started in March then, as they rearranged the curriculum a bit by the time she was in fourth.

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[103] Playing ballerina is from "Our Very First Show." Steph's diner order, mentioned in "Fuller House" season 5, surely comes from what are already her favorites, so Danny easily figures Pam will take Steph there after dance class someday/ She does, which Steph recalls long after Pam's death.

Michelle would have a really cool one from England in fourth grade; by that time it was easier to communicate around the globe.

Danny – Oct. 23 – Harvest Festival, Father-Daughter Bonding, Helping D.J.'s class:

D.J. and I always had a very close relationship. It was perfect to have the harvest festival for fourth graders at the same time as Pam was resting and pregnant. I'd actually spent a lot of time with her, while Joey sometimes watched Steph, the last few weeks before Pam gave birth. Of course, her mothers' group helped, too. That's something Pam had helped a couple others with, watching their toddlers while the parents were pregnant, though a couple of them were only children, too.

We won, thanks to my help, but D.J. did a great job on her own.[104] I told Pam afterward that this Thanksgiving, she should let D.J. do some of the work. She always made me so proud; all the girls did.

I also got the thrill of helping with D.J. and Kimmy's class Thanksgiving party before going into work next month, since Pam was busy with the baby. It was their science time, so I talked about the dangers of mildew if the turkey isn't frozen right, and with all the leftover candy.[105] It was an odd subject, but they appreciated it. I think.

Stephanie – Nov. 14 - On being sisters:

Because we had always had separate rooms, each of us felt like we should have more of the attention. It was harder for D.J. than for me when Michelle came home, though. I was more into imaginary play, and counted Mr. Bear as a real friend. D.J., on the other hand, was more independent and mature.

I was closer to Michelle those early years; I'm sure it would have been different if Mom had moved me in with D.J. and helped us get along when Michelle was born. D.J. was a bit distant at times, though, for reasons you'll see later, so while we had fun together, more often it was Michelle and I playing. I loved helping her. It was such a thrill, not only with school, but other things, like learning to stand up for herself.[106] I felt so special doing that, because then there was a special part of me in her; I could take pride in knowing I helped someone.

So, why didn't it continue at twelve and thirteen? D.J. didn't actively encourage that desire in me. She'd spent lots of time reacting and teaching; the time she spent doing that would be much more than she'd dreamed. But, without her dedicating herself to it, it seemed more like a duty. A good case in point was when we spent a long time in the park playing Frisbee and kicking a soccer ball around once. We'd had good times before, but she hadn't realized how much fun she could have with us; she'd recognized it could be even more fun than hanging out with a boyfriend.[107]

I copied that attitude, sadly. I began to think that Michelle didn't need as much help anymore, and that boys would be the coolest thing. I abandoned that idea after Michelle's accident, and started to realize the fun of family again,[108] but…well, we're getting way ahead of ourselves here.

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[104] Book, "Pigs, Pies, and Plenty of Problems," see Book Universe section for how other girls did

[105] "Be Your Own Best Friend,"it's norm for memory of it to be off by a year; Kimmy says it was fifth, which means the error could even be hers.

[106] "Day of the Rhino"

[107] "Love On the Rocks"

[108] "Michelle Rides Again 2"

Pam – On time between each child, and the attic:

I was so thrilled; the girls were all happy and healthy. Danny and I decided we might try to have another child in four or five years; the spacing as we'd planned seemed about right. He still thought it would be great to have a boy, so we figured when D.J. was a teen, we'd start trying. Michelle could share a room for a few years, and we could make the attic into a bachelorette pad. Since the others would still be young, we wanted an adult's bedroom to remain on the same floor, so we could hear them and comfort nightmares and help if someone was sick and stuff easier.

That was for later, though. Right now, we simply kept celebrating family, feeling we had it all, yet also knowing how important it is to celebrate what we have, because we're not promised tomorrow. We have to enjoy things while we can.

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5. If You Had One Day - Nov. 12, 1986-May 16, 1987

Jesse - Nov., 1986:

Pam was so special. I always saw them at Thanksgiving, and a bit more during the year; the girls thought of me as this guy who stopped by very rarely and hung out with lady friends otherwise. The way I acted was so different compared to what they knew.

I was missing something, though. I didn't know what it was. But, I knew there was something special that Pam and Danny had, and I was starting to feel that need for a more permanent relationship. I'd been such a rebel, though, I really didn't know how to do that, or who to ask. All I knew was, Pam had something real and wonderful.

The day Michelle was born. I could have sworn she smiled at me - the nurse said it was gas, I was interested enough to be there by this time, but I still didn't care about full names.[109] I was extremely happy for Pam. I wanted that kind of a family, but, I didn't know how to reconcile that with being this tough, macho rebel. I'd soon find out, though.

Joey - Dec., 1986:

Christmas was fun, as usual. Stephanie was beyond just opening everything really fast by now. She found lots of gifts before, and she was so excited after that, she went to Kimmy's with the sitter there – it seemed like the sitter or, one or two times, Garth was always there when Steph was over there.Anyway, along with D.J., she found all Kimmy's gifts, too. They wondered where she was, and found her playing with Kimmy's astronaut Barbie.[110] She didn't get in much trouble, just sat in the corner for five minutes at home; she just got so excited about everything. Kimmy was miffed but got over it fast, you just couldn't tell as much since Kimmy teased others because she got teased so much herself. And, maybe for attention since her parents already ignored her a fair amount.

Steph got a punching bag, too - she hadn't had a problem with being physical for a couple years, but she had lots of energy, and needed ways to work it out. She also wanted to copy D.J., who had begun taking karate.

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[109] "Michelle Rides Again 2" – though he could have forgotten D.J.'s middle name was "Margaret" when it surprises him in "Sisterly Love," it's more likely it just shows his lack of interest till Pam died

[110] From the "Fuller House" series, it also proves, as Book Universe will show, she didn't dislike Kimmy at first, she may have found her annoying but her biggest problem was needing D.J. more. It's actually fairly easy to have the sitter there, which let Stephanie never meet the Gibblers - canon from the last season of "Fuller House" – such as when Jesse "stashes girls there" in "Pal Joey."

Pam had taught D.J. how to bake that pumpkin pie. D.J. helped her make another one this Christmas. Stephanie helped, too. I loved it there; it was the big family I never had as a kid. D.J. was upset Michelle was getting so much attention, but then Kimmy came over, they had just moved in next door and the girls had fun together.

I was glad - I never thought she was that bad, though she was odd. Even though streets everywhere are odd on one side, even on the other, for instance, she insisted for the first several months that their house should be 1881 or 1883 since ours was 1882.[111] Besides, the more the merrier, I determined.

Stephanie and I enjoyed watching cartoons together. Pam didn't want her pulling pranks like I still did at times, though. Indeed, even when I wasn't pulling them I was pretending to years later, like telling Becky with a straight face I'd mixed white and colored clothes in the warmest water possible.[112]

Stephanie - Jan., 1987:

I turned five, and I was so excited. Granny Tanner sent me this great stuffed dog - I carried it all around. I had lots of animals. One was a bear I slept with and squeezed so much his neck got really flimsy and he needed restuffed.[113] Both grandmas and even Joey often got me those. So, not using Mr. Bear was okay for a while.

Mr. Bear quickly became my best friend, of course, because of Mom. I didn't need him as much right then, but I really did in the few weeks after Mom died. Then, I figured Dad needed him more than I did, so I often tried to give Mr. Bear to Dad after Mom died.[114] He looked so sad sometimes, though he tried to hide it.

I always wanted a dog, too. However, having Michelle around would be better, because I could help her grow and learn so much. I was already reading to her.

I wasn't quite as upset over everyone saying how cute she was, because I wasn't used to being the only one. There were still a few times I felt left out, but Mom had always done a good job of making me feel better then.

Uncle Jesse and Joey would get that way, but they really had to grow into their jobs. At least I could help a little then. For instance, I was very good at knowing what people felt most of the time, like the difference between "I'm in big trouble" tears and D.J.'s "I didn't do it" tears once.[115]

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[111] Steph talks so fast in "All Stood Up" it's blurred. She's nervous talking to a boy, so how she said it is in character. Her mistake shows she inherited Danny's rambling. As for the number, it's hard to read, and as noted elsewhere it's not even the house in the opening (which also has a red door whereas the Tanners' is brown). There's a difference between a prop and the storyline.

[112] "Be True To Your Pre-School"

[113] In "Jesse's Girl," Steph brings Jesse a stuffed bear with his head detached. She could have pulled it off in frustration. It could also be one she found that Pam started but never finished. In the book "Daddy's Not So Little Girl," though, Michelle stuffs a "favorite bear" from when Steph was a baby into Steph's sleeping bag, and she's very grateful later. It's likely this bear; the description doesn't match Mr. Bear, and Steph would recall Mr. Bear as a friend, not just a bear, even in seventh grade.

[114] Since we don't see Mr. Bear much in season 1, it's natural to assume he was with Danny. Kids share their own comfort objects with parents who are lonely sometimes, figuring they need something to sleep with since one parent isn't there. The dog mentioned is one she carried in the first few episodes; such a dog, and the bear mentioned above would be "second in line" after Mr. Bear..

[115] "Just Say No Way," plus how she can tell D.J.'s telling her the truth in that episode. Also, possibly, "Our Very First Show," Stephanie can tell baby Michelle has "that hungry look in her eye."

D.J. - Feb., 1987:

Stephanie asked me something funny on my birthday. She wondered why her birthday was first even though I was older. I wished I knew how to explain those things like Mom. I can now, but it took years. I suppose it took that long for Mom, too, though it's easy to think she always had that skill.

By this time, I was mostly over my frustration at not being the center of attention, and Mom had us really loving to be together. There were times I'd willingly change Michelle's diaper. Sometimes I'd refer to how everyone talked about how cute the baby was, though, by jokingly asking Mom or Dad, "How can you call a dirty diaper cute?" It was one of those times when even Dad was at a loss for words.

Still, I was excited about the baby by now. I could learn to be the best, just like Mom. And yet, I wasn't forced to be. I could get involved in helping with her, or doing things I knew how to do – like fix simple meals – as much as I wanted. And yet, I had my own space, and I expected that that would never change.

When I trusted Christ as my Savior about a year earlier, I knew I wasn't perfect and needed to repent and receive His forgiveness. I received His salvation by simple faith. I did nothing to earn or deserve it – it was all by God's grace that I did it. That was a little tough for me, because I was so used to achieving things on my own. However, I knew I couldn't do it all myself. In the back of my mind, I really disliked arguing with my sister, or getting upset with Mom and Dad, or other little things I did. I knew I was trying but it just wasn't enough. So, that desire to be the best was not only a hindrance, it was also a blessing, in that I had tried so hard on my own, and wasn't always satisfied with even my efforts. And, I knew I came short of God's best. After all, my best was just my own best. His best is perfection, which is the life Jesus lived.

I really wish I'd turned to Him before things got too rough later. There were lots of times I wished I could explain things like Mom could, or I wished I could have asked Mom a question. I was too busy comparing myself to her. I never thought about how I could just pray and ask for wisdom right away. We usually only prayed when we were desperate, like Steph with Mr. Bear. Only since I became a parent have I realized that God wants you to cast all your cares on Him.

Becky- March, 1987:

Our show changed names recently as part of a new image,[116] from "Good Morning, Omaha" to "A.M. Omaha," which they kept till I left for San Francisco.

I wish I'd gotten to know Pam on Earth. At this point, I'd been host of a morning show in Omaha for a year and a half. My dream was a larger market, though I wasn't sure where. I liked sports of all kind, and had worked in that area in college. Also, my brothers were hockey fans, though my sisters weren't.[117] My Aunt Ida moved out to San Francisco to retire in March, and she liked the Bay Area, so I considered that.

I can't help but wonder - did she meet Pam? She didn't think she had. But, Pam was so full of life; she touched many, many lives either by herself, or by helping others.

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[116] Hence a different name given in "The Producers," fairly common with some news shows. The second name was mentioned first, but she had been with them under another name, as well.

[117] "Nice Guys Finish First," as will be noted with the wedding, with the focus on the bride and groom, there's no reason for the viewer to see any of her siblings then; a perfect example of the fact we see less than 1% of a sitcom family's lives, but also of the "TV pen pal" telling a story; if you get a letter about a wedding, the writer won't usually mention every guest.

So, she felt that influence in her life somehow, I'm sure.

Danny - May, 1987:

Pam had given so much love, so much tenderness, it was amazing. There's a special type of love called storge, that tenderhearted parental love that is always giving. I know I look past little things and try to make her seem perfect at times, and Jesse's right about her taking forever in the bathroom, or being late a lot. However, she truly personified that storge love – pure family love with all the warmth and compassion that's supposed to come with it. It's just short of agape, which is true, unconditional love when the other can't or won't love back.

Mother's Day was great. The older girls brought Michelle in and gave Pam breakfast in bed, and did all sorts of wonderful things with her. It was one of those days we'll never forget. It's times like this that make you think. We dedicated ourselves to family. And, somehow, something special happened soon before a tragedy that allowed us all to say that - while it hurt to lose her - we'd made the most of every moment, including our last wonderful times with Pam.

The following weekend, Pam went out to buy groceries while I watched the girls; it was our Saturday routine. School would be out soon, and then we could have the most incredible vacation. We'd visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

It's an important question - what would you do if you knew today was your last day on earth? I'm proud to say, because we were so dedicated to family, because we always hugged and said "I love you" and never left the room angry and did so many special things together, we were certain to have no regrets if one of us did die.

We'd discussed it before, but it was never expected. Nobody expects these things. They just happen. That was the most painful thing of all at first. Then, came the emptiness. And, the questions - why? All I could do was repeat what someone said to Big Bird when he asked why Mr. Hooper had died. There was a Sesame Street episode where they learn about his death, and Big Bird's reaction to it. And, we owned the book based on that episode. The answer they finally managed to tell Big Bird - "Just because" – is all we could think of, too. That's the way this world is. And, it hurts sometimes.

I knew we'd made it through hard times before, and we could make it through this one, too. The girls managed to keep their faith, because they'd been taught that things happen in this world that we don't like. The rain falls on the just and the unjust, and all that. Keeping faith that God was good and loving was one thing. Getting through this was another. Honestly, I didn't know how we were going to do it without Pam.

It's just that somehow, we did.

V. FULL HOUSE - THE TV YEARS - May 1987-May, 1995

Interlude - Dear Pen Pal - On Episodes

Narrator:

Think of a TV show as a letter to you, the viewing pen pal. A fictional "friend" tells (through TV) something they find interesting. Your pen pal won't tell every detail, leading you to want to write and ask "What happened?" Your pen pal might bore you writing more about one thing than another. They can accidentally get confused describing things like colors or ages (which even real parents get mixed up at times), or want to act silly. Overall, though, you read your "pen pal's letters" with interest.

This explains things and fills in gaps, so you can learn more about this loving family. The "family" treats episodes as letters to you, the pen pal. "They" assume you know things. Dates are given throughout. Comments on an episode won't always have footnotes if right before or after the episode and date it took place. For instance, a check that helps pay for Joey's new room is mentioned right after "Joey's Place" is listed, with the calendar dates it took place. So, there is no "Joey's Place" footnote after the check. Plus, earlier footnoted things aren't always expanded upon (some are), as "the Tanners" explained them - confusion with ages, Danny's stepdad, etc.. Still, if one needs explained, it will be, perhaps with further details in a footnote.

Your "pen pal" may not write letters in order. In TV, you're a slave to a schedule. Say an episode before a character moves ("Our Very First Promo") is pre-empted. It only airs after the episode where he moves ("Joey's Place."). The airdates are in place forever. Same with episodes that take place one day (Saturday for instance) and air another day - if they insisted on airing them the exact date they took place, you wouldn't know when to watch! So, not all take place in order of airing, though most do.

Finally, let's face it, women weren't allowed to perform in Shakespeare's day. Males played all female roles. Yet, you'd be deemed insane if you claimed Juliet was a man. So, appearances must be taken with a grain of salt. A performer is not the character. So, Jodie Sweetin was not the exact same as the character Stephanie. She had pierced ears, but played a girl who didn't. Just be thankful a girl played Stephanie. :-)

What will be explained? What surprises are in store? Read on.

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1. It's Too Empty - May 16, 1987-Oct., 1988

Danny - Sat., May 16, 1987:

The officer came to the door while the older girls were playing out back. Stephanie came in, saw me crying, and got scared. I hugged her and held on for dear life. Then, D.J. came in; I asked her to call Joey to come over.

Something terrible had happened to Pam.

I went down to identify the body; Jesse and his folks met me there. It was Pam's body, all right. I couldn't stand the brokenness from the accident - the other driver had been swerving at a ridiculous speed. He died on the operating table. We learned later he was drunk. Anyone could have told them that, from the type of accident.

Jesse:

For the first time since I was five or six, I threw up. Her car had flipped several times from the impact, killing her instantly. I couldn't stand to think about it. Pam was so

full of life and hope and energy, and there she was now. Mom and Pop were devastated, too. I sat around and stared blankly ahead - till I realized everyone else was doing that.

I decided I would bring everyone together, and get everything arranged.[118] Dad had hidden his feelings till he exploded. I buried myself in work to work them off.

D.J. – Learning About It, First Night After the Accident:

Joey and I talked with Stephanie a lot that day, to try and help her understand. We read her that Sesame Street book about Mr. Hooper's death, "I'll Miss You, Mr. Hooper." Despite many readings and talking about it, it didn't seem real.

Joey cried, too. He tried to hide it with humor, but it wasn't the same as when one of us would skin a knee when he babysat, and he did the voice of the blood clotting and disinfectant getting the germs out for us.

I couldn't imagine what Dad was going through. He could barely get anything but "I love you" out over the phone when he called to talk to each of us.

He came home near Stephanie's bedtime, and said Uncle Jesse was arranging things. He was so transparent I couldn't believe it - he blurted to Joey, "I'm glad I have a friend like you who's chronically unemployed except for comedy acts." Dad was more honest than he'd wanted to be about a lot, I'm sure. Usually, he tried so hard to shield us. But, he knew he had to face it here. He couldn't hide the notion like when he'd tried to convince me not to watch that episode of Sesame Street.

When Dad got in, he explained to Stephanie that she didn't have to try to feed Michelle. She'd been trying to get milk out of some stuffed animals by squeezing really hard. Dad had brought home some formula Dr. Landress prescribed. Plus, at six months, she would have been weaned in a few months, anyway. Steph worried about simple things; she'd been reading for a year, but her mind was still on the basics.

I needed something silly like Steph's query to happen, just to make things seem a bit like normal. I felt emptiness around the house that I couldn't describe. Grandma and Grandpa had caught a flight in and got to our place just before I went to bed; Steph stayed up till they came. Even then, I didn't think it would ever be fun again.

"Dad," I said, moping as we sat in my room after Stephanie had gone to bed, "if you're trying to fill the house with people it won't work."

"Honey, I'm not trying to fill it with people; although it would be nice if Grandpa could just quit his job and stay here, too. They need his income, though, and Grandma's already going to be staying here for a few months." He looked at the three small bits of bread piled on a plate near my bed. "What kind of sandwich is that?"

"Believe it or not, a bread sandwich. And, no, Kimmy wasn't eating it; that was Steph's. At least when Kimmy eats strange sandwiches, she puts ingredients in them." I smiled. "Kimmy was here for a while, though; she's really a great friend."

Dad tried to laugh - and succeeded a little, but quickly became wistful again. "Well, bread is an ingredient, at least to Steph, if it goes between two other slices. Boy, Mom used to love to tell me all about the cute stuff Stephanie would do."

"I know." We reminisced for a few minutes, till I suddenly noticed something. "You have Mr. Bear?"

Dad chuckled while clutching Steph's bear, and gazing thoughtfully at it. He recalled how Mom had given it to her. "Steph gave him to me, since Grandma's sleeping

[118] "It's Not My Job"

in her room. She thought, well, when I go to bed tonight….” He began weeping again. “As much as he loves cartoons and other kid stuff, not even Joey sleeps with stuffed animals. But, well, for the first night…”

Stephanie and Grandma appeared in my room with a dog. “Stephanie says she tried to be strong, but she needs Mr. Bear tonight, Danny.”

“Oh, fine, Mom.” They exchanged animals, and Dad hugged and kissed Stephanie good night again. Then, he just sat there.

When we were alone again, after a period of silence I asked, “Are you going to move, or should I sleep on the couch?”

“Oh. Right. I guess there’s more to do.” He left, and I gazed out my door. I couldn’t help but think that as funny as that scene had been with the animals, there was just something missing that would never come back.

Stephanie - Blocking Some Stuff Out, Exaggeration

It was harder than you can imagine. I didn’t want to leave my room much - I’d remember Mommy wasn’t there – and a few times, in my adult years, I’d actually say I’d been four to blot out the actual memory.[119]

. Had I roomed with D.J. before Mom died, it would have eased the pain a lot.[120] Having Grandma sleep in there with me was a good stopgap, but it might have been better had I moved in with D.J. from the start.

This helped to spark some problems I had with commitment in relationships, too.[121] I was afraid of tragedy. I’m not sure if D.J. being more of a mother figure would have cured thatunless she’d started on that road before, but I clung to Grandma instead. This doesn’t mean having Grandma in with me was a bad thing – D.J. needed help, too.

So did Dad. Thankfully, someone was stepping in.

Max:

Hope this is a good time to step in from the Netflix Unvierse, or NetU. That’s such a crucial age; I was a bit older, and I handled it differently. I liked to laugh and have fun, but I got a bit too much like Grandpa Danny; it’s how I coped.

Jackson:

It’s weird; Max never really thought he had to hang around me a lot and try to see me as a father figure. Yeah, part of that was Grandpa Danny and the other guys. But, I think part of it is how much more relational girls are. Of course, my man Uncle Jesse was just starting to realize how great family relationships could be.

Jesse – Starting to Become a Family Man:

Papouli was caring for a brother in Greece who’d had a heart attack, so he and Gina couldn’t come. I busied myself with everything that needed done. That way, I wouldn’t have to think about how the best sister in the world was gone.

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[119] Comment in series “Fuller House” that she “never did” is a very normal esxaggeration, while her saying Pam died when she was 4 once in that series can happen with some people dealing with trauma. She says 5 in the series other times so she knows when it was, she just doesn’t want to think about it.

[120] Happens in books, as you’ll see later.

[121] A “Fuller House” series discussion highlights this; D.J. as a mother figure in books helps there; it helps add to her clinginess in “Aftershocks,” also.

I shared some things with the pastor. I didn't tell him about dropping out, but I admitted there was stuff she'd kept quiet about that I really needed to make right with God, if I couldn't with her. I knew she was with Him. And, I felt like I wanted - needed - some connection to her.

That's when we talked about the chain with the cross I wore at times afterward. It could be a man's or woman's. Pam said if something happened to her, I was to have it. The pastor shared what the cross meant, and for the first time, I really listened to that message with interest. I'd rebelled against everything and everyone, including God.

A couple days later, I received Christ's forgiveness. I believed He died and rose again for me, and agreed with Him about how I'd gone against Him with my sin. I was on my way to Heaven because of my faith after that, but the problem was, I wasn't dedicated to Him. There was too much of me that loved to be free of responsibility.

There's always a change, however, when a person repents. The surest sign of that in me was how I wanted to be involved in Pam's family. Instead of coming a few times a year and never staying, I wanted to be there where Pam wasn't for those girls.

In addition, my attitude slowly changed toward all those ladies I hung around with; I couldn't stand to do it just for a little thrill. I wanted to find someone to settle down with; I hoped each woman would be the one for me.[122]

A tiny spark inside me kept growing. When you repent, you're just agreeing with God that you need a change of heart, and that you want Him to make that change in you because you can't do it yourself. That's just what I did, which is why I was able to be interested in family so much. It's just that I didn't know what all that would entail, and I rebelled against God just like I had my folks and Pam.

Deep down, though, I started to love the concept of putting down roots.

It would take me a while to really come around to being a family man. I was tough yet when I moved in with Danny and the girls. Sometimes, especially early, I had to be dragged kicking and screaming, in a spiritual sense, into doing what was right.

I didn't realize life has rules to give us freedom. I know, it sounds weird, but look at music. If you play a bunch of notes without paying attention to the time, key changes, and so on, it sounds like gibberish. Those rules are there to let music make sense, so it's fun to play. I didn't care about that right away, though. Even years later, I'd be talking about how rules were meant to be broken.[123]

Thankfully, God was way more patient than Dad had been. It felt just like Pam's unconditional love, in fact. Her life had been a testimony to God's love and the joy one can have when one knows Him. Soon, I was talking about moving out of my apartment and in with Danny and the girls; which, while Danny didn't tell him till decades later, made Danny hesitate about Joey's offer to move in and help at first.[124]

Danny - June 5:

The funeral had been on a Tuesday. D.J. had been glad there were a couple more weeks of school, to create a routine again. Stephanie was younger, and needed the time at

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[122] "Jesse's Girl" - though it takes him a while to truly realize all there is to settling down, this comment shows there was a growing desire there that wouldn't have been earlier.

[123] "Please Don't Touch the Dinosaur"

[124] Series "Fuller House" – Danny's first thought was he just wanted Jesse, who had a stable exterminator job and didn't work late nights. He likely saw a small change from pre-series, so Jesse pondered and likely offered to come first, but he was still a bit wild so Joey came, too, without knowing of Danny's concerns.

home with her grandmother – my mom - and I. Even if she'd been in preschool we'd have pulled her out those last few weeks of it, unless she really wanted or needed to go back; just like we did still take her to dance, where it was her first year, and she went with the playgroup a few times, when things were a little busier.

However, now that school was out, everything felt dull, as if we didn't know what we were supposed to do. I didn't think Stephanie would let go of Mr. Bear the rest of her life after the funeral. Last night, though, she gave him to me again.

I'd like to say I was only humoring Stephanie. I can't, though. I almost started talking to Mr. Bear, I missed Pam so terribly. I wasn't cleaning,[125] but I organized things like crazy. Once I told the girls to chew every bite over twenty times, and tried to count with them. Thankfully, Mom and Jesse convinced me I was going overboard.[126] Pam would have stopped me long before then, though. In retrospect, talking to Mr. Bear probably would have been a good idea.

I could tell Jesse was changed, though. Steph had lost a tooth, and he actually asked if the tooth fairy came.

Jesse - June 10:

I really enjoyed the family. For the first time, little kids weren't rugrats who I felt sorry for because they weren't as cool as me. I saw my nieces as girls who could be fun to be around. Of course, I still used it as a term of endearment, but I didn't always focus on myself. I was beginning to think of staying a while, and wanting it to work.

Now, don't get me wrong, I had a lot to learn, like how to keep babies from crying. Even after I moved in, at times I just didn't want to follow the program.

Still, even here the thought kept occurring to me - what if I moved in to help Danny? I even told Dad I'd start working more with his extermination business, just because it would help Danny and the girls with finances

Danny – Jesse offers to move in, Joey a bit later:

Jesse brought up the possibility of moving in today. I was stunned. I'd asked him to help more, knowing he would. In a way, I'd hinted that it would be great if he moved in for a week or so. But, when he offered on his own to live here for a few months, I was amazed. Even better, Joey offered to move in, also, once Mom had to go back to work.

Ramona:

See, in NetU Steph's kind of like their Uncle Jesse, but there's a difference. Jesse was wild from the start; Steph got involved with lots of other stuff so she had an excuse to avoid her commitment phobia. It was easier for her in a way to move in.

Of course, as noted, my mom was there for D.J. from the start, letting D.J. cry on her shoulder a lot after Pam died. There was lots more similarity with Joey there.

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[125] "The Return of Grandma," and indeed the first four episodes, show typical depression in that he doesn't do something he normally loves and does constantly afterward, which is cleaning

[126] "The Trouble With Danny" - A rule saying each bite must be chewed 20+ times would not last without a challenge. Normal conversation and even eating would be impossible if everyone concentrated so much on how many times they chewed, and it clearly isn't in place other episodes. Plus, Pam would not allow such a rule. Danny says in "Please Don't Touch the Dinosaur" Jesse helped him mellow out. Hence, the part about the food was a joke, referring to this time, and the reference to Jesse helping him mellow out referred to how Jesse convinced him not to have such a rule.

D.J. – Bathrooms, etc.:

It still felt way too empty. A thousand people wouldn't have helped. Besides, we wouldn't have any bathroom space with a thousand. We only had the one on the second floor and a partial bathroom - just a toilet and sink - on the first floor.[127]

Grandpa flew down a few weekends, and used his week's vacation. That calmed Steph some, but she still needed more attention for a bit. She made up monster noises at times to show that the first few months.[128] She behaved really well otherwise, though.

Danny - July 4:

Father's Day came and went with Jesse and Joey filling in admirably for Pam in helping the girls to buy stuff for me.

One piece of good news had recently come. The other driver's estate offered some money – it had been on the local news, a drunk driver ramming into and killing a young mother. My lawyer said that given the fellow's assets, the fact he wasn't insured, and so on, it was better than we might have expected, and we quickly accepted.

Pam's life insurance would pay off the house. But, those were things I would handle weeks from now; unless Jesse wanted to take care of them. I had a feeling he might; he was working tirelessly with his band and Nick's business. He had a goal - being able to move in and be there for my girls by the middle of August, the same as Joey. With that, Mom finally set a date to return to Washington and her own job.

1-1: Our Very First Show	Friday, August 14, 1987
1-2: Our Very First Night	Night of Friday, August 14, 1987

D.J. - Sat. Aug. 15:

Things were looking up now, but at first I was desperate to have my own room. I made up a story about Kimmy having three sisters and her own room,[129] hoping Dad wouldn't recall it was just her and Garth. It was a desperate plea for attention. Dad ignored it, though. At least he knew how to do that like Mom would have.

Danny:

I would have called D.J.'s bluff, but I didn't know what to do, I was so depressed. Same with desserts that night, I knew Pam would have done something to teach the girls how bad it was to trick Jesse into letting them stay up so late and eat enough sweets for a large banquet. I just didn't know what she would do, I was always working so much, and Pam had everything running so smoothly.

D.J. told me it was like Mom would do, since I made them apologize. I was on the right track. It worked, especially with Steph; Pam probably would have removed desert, maybe for a week, too. Both girls responded well to Jesse for the most part.

Unfortunately, I still wasn't cleaning. I wasn't as strict as I had been right after

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[127] Joey mentions a bathroom there, beyond the alcove, when directing someone at least once, and also goes toward one there in an episode, as does Kirsten ("The Graduates") and a couple other people. Danny comes out from having cleaned that bathroom in "Lust in the Dust."

[128] "Our Very First Promo"

[129] "Our Very First Show," before Kimmy's character was developed, but true to D.J.'s. D.J. had motive to make this up to get attention. She bends the truth a couple other times. So, Kimmy has only one brother, as the vast majority state, but the statement should be considered a D.J. trick.

Pam died, but I still had problems. Jesse was helping me mellow out, though.

Jesse - Aug. 29 – Building Loving Relationships:

Moving in was wonderful. I was like the Fonz on "Happy Days," still really cool, but maturing very fast. The girls helped me mellow out several times faster than the Fonz ever did, though. It was a change in me that couldn't have come if I just tried it myself, though. I would have just gone back to the carefree life sooner or later and stayed there, without any qualms; that time I did I still had some qualms, that's why I came back so fast. And, usually I was glad my life had changed, even that first year.

I loved getting to know the older girls, and sharing memories of Pam. I shared all about how I'd get in trouble and how Pam was always there for me. I had the idea of giving guitar lessons there in the house, so I could be there more and didn't have to work as much with Dad. D.J. even wanted to learn the guitar from me; boy, that made me proud! I didn't give lessons for long, but it was a good way to earn a little extra at first.

Stephanie liked to play pretend. She was great at playing house and having invisible tea parties. I even started getting a little silly at times; not like Joey, but enough to distract her from things like getting a booboo or slamming her finger in a drawer.[130]

When she'd play a mom and I'd be the kid, we came up with some of the funniest ideas. Once, I told her a fitting punishment would be to make me sing Barry Manilow. So, if I messed up with something, even if we weren't playing, she'd scold me with, "You have to sing Barry Manilow for three straight hours." I'd told her who that was; she didn't know lots of performers, just songs, which is typical for that age.[131]

The one I really enjoyed was Michelle. Living on the second floor, I really felt a close bond with her. If she cried at night, I got up. If she woke up before me, I woke up and went to her crib automatically. I fell in love with helping her; she was so precious, and I thought about how she didn't have a mom. I wanted so badly for everything to be perfect for her. Pretty soon, I was the one she called out to for everything. Well, okay, she called for Danny just as much with nightmares, what few she had, but I was a close second even there. I helped her learn to dress herself and everything over the next few years. I really became Pam's replacement with her.

Danny and even D.J. a little took care of baths till Joey's and my target date for bathing Michelle. We had to work at just feeding her.

1-3: The First Day of School Mon., August 31th, 1987

Stephanie – Sept. 4 – Loving school; the turtle:

School was great, once I got used to it. I played with Harry on the playground some. There was another good friend, too, a girl named Allie who I met my first day.[132]. Like me, she hadn't wanted to come; her mom struggled to get her dressed, and she

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[130] "Jesse's Girl," he distracts her by asking the color of the pain, whether it has stripes, etc.

[131] "Beach Boy Bingo" - she wouldn't know the Beach Boys by sight, but would know songs.

[132] Allie is a book friend who moved away in the TV Universe. Steph certainly had friends we don't see in the 99% of the time we don't see the Tanners. Steph's maid of honor in "Middle Age Crazy" is very quiet like Allie, and Steph would know the Maid of Honor should be a best friend. Allie is probably also the shy yet amused girl seated beside Stephanie as Michelle sneaks into the classroom to see Stephanie in "Double Trouble." Books mention Allie being sat next to Stephanie alphabetically. Since they don't do that – but would soon - in "The First Day of School," Allie dawdled and came later. D.J. only went to her class at the end, so not all kids would have been present yet in Steph's class.

arrived just before the teacher organized us alphabetically for the first time. Allie was really shy, but that was okay. I had a lot to tell her. And I kept talking, and talking. D.J. would come down to my class if I needed, too, at times. She'd sit and comfort me out in the hall. That usually only happened the first couple months. I was past my initial grieving stage; I hadn't wanted to stay in my room except for the first few weeks, but I'm sure that stage seemed longer to everyone.

D.J. and I kept the turtle Jesse brought home for us next month on the wall opposite the door,[133] till he died a few years later. Dad wasn't much on pets, but thought this was a good one, and it helped some, though Mr. Bear was closer. Neither of us really understood how Uncle Jesse almost had a serious motorcycle accident, but that was good; we had enough problems. Today, Dad's dad suffered a major stroke. He had to fly up there, and while we didn't know the man that well, Dad felt sadder, and stopped cleaning altogether again. D.J. told me not to worry – she had everything under control if there was a real problem. Only years later did she say she'd been faking it.

Joey – Sept. 8 – Danny's stepdad passes away:

Danny's dad passed away mere days after a major stroke, at 71, six years older than his mom. It was her second marriage, and he'd spent his life helping them.

The girls weren't affected much since they rarely saw him. But, this prolonged Danny's depression and led to his cleaning even more incessantly once he resumed. I hinted jokingly about therapy a few times, but he didn't want to hear about it.

Danny – Michelle Develops Without Mom:

Michelle was attached to Pam. Jesse's emergence filled a gap in her life. She got used to lots of people, but she needed to bond with a "mother figure" of sorts for her mind to grow normally. That was all of us, but it was especially Jesse.

D.J. had helped, too; she was lucky she lived in the late 20th century and not the 19th. People back then had lots more children. The older siblings were expected to be like junior moms and dads, with much more responsibility.

Jesse was there, though. Right after Pam died, he provided a lot of nurturing and tenderness even before moving in here.

I had, also, of course. For a short time, I was the one she always wanted to be around. As she got close to a year, however, it was Jesse. He always got up with her, always played with her, and once he started going to work with Nick again, he'd still tuck her in at night with me and sing to her and give her baths and all that stuff that babies need so they can say, "The world is safe, people will take care of my needs, and I have a mental picture of the person who will respond to me the most."

That image is important for babies. It's why they then go through separation anxiety at times. They get an idea of what a stranger is, what "family" means, and who will take care of them. That can be one caregiver or several, but whoever it is, that child then goes through a stage where they're antsy because that person leaves for a while.

Had Pam died during that stage, Michelle still would have been okay, she just would have needed lots of reassurance. As it was, she bonded with Jesse.

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[133] In other words, the one you never see because of camera placement, but that must be there. In a later episode Steph says she had a turtle at eight, so Bubba lived at least three years. D.J. mentions a turtle in the book "Welcome To My Zoo." It's the same one, as they say they'll take care of him.

Stephanie - Oct. 12:

Dad started cleaning again. I liked that, but he was doing it a lot more than usual. Still, it felt like more of life was normal. Uncle Jesse and Joey weren't Mom, but at least they were fun to have around. And, tonight, Dad didn't even need to sleep with Mr. Bear. I put him in Dad's room other times, though, just because he looked a little sadder, and maybe a little to let him know I was feeling the loss just then, too.

I was very good at talking about my problems, though. I could always tell everyone just what I was feeling.[134] I had thought about monsters and made up such noises in my mind sometimes, but by this time, Dad always knew if my "monster" noises were really requests for assurance or not. Those thoughts about monsters went away by late fall. And, Dad always spent quality father-daughter time with each of us.

Danny - Oct. 14:

We went out on a boat Saturday for some male bonding time. Joey and I dreamed of owning our own boat.[135] Of course, part of that was because Joey loved Popeye. But, there was a real sense of camaraderie now that we were raising my children together.

We couldn't afford it yet - Joey was barely getting by with comedy. Jesse and Joey didn't have rents, but we had two more mouths to feed. The house was paid for, but I hoped one would find a good job. Little did I know that because of his being a dropout, there were almost no jobs available to Jesse. But, had I known, he still would have been allowed in, because he was a great addition to the family.

Joey – Why he developed that way:

I knew Danny was hoping I'd find a job. It was a little frustrating for me, too. Jesse was bonding so well with the girls; I figured I'd have to be the one to go to work.

That was kind of tough. I loved the freedom of acting like a kid. Some of that was because of my dad - he was way too militaristic and strict at home. He was much more stringent than Danny; Danny tried to be comical about his at times.

People can maintain childlike qualities their whole lives in the worst cases, known as Peter Pan Syndrome, though that's not an actual diagnosis, I don't think. I wasn't that bad, but while I would earn a living if need be, I much preferred comedy.

Luckily, my agent called and said he'd gotten me a booking at area colleges. The catch was that I'd be doing it after Thanksgiving, during exam weeks for some, but it was a big deal to me. I would finally be bringing in some major money, and I could impress people and maybe get more offers.

Jesse, of course, was just trying to impress women. He even wanted to skydive once, though he never actually jumped, as it was too windy. He missed his target, the plane, and just jumped right over to this woman's car and they drove off together.[136] One thing, though; he felt tempted after he trusted Christ, but he remained pure till he and Becky were married. This first month or two he was close to doing it, though. He had a lot of the Fonz in him yet. And, almost nobody becomes spiritually mature overnight.

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[134] "Aftershocks," where Danny said she was always able to before

[135] "The Last Dance"

[136] "Daddy's Home"

1- 5 Sea Cruise Oct. 17, 1987

Joey - Oct. 19 – Pilot's license:

It was a good thing Jesse was home more and giving his guitar lessons now, because Danny was working really hard, and I was busy fulfilling my dream.

I'd had only a couple more hours to get in before I got my license when I moved in. Today, I raced into the house, buzzed around the living room making airplane noises and holding my arms out, then announced to Jesse that I could fly. After I assured him I didn't think I could sprout wings, but that I'd gotten my pilot's license, he requested, "Remind me never to get in a plane with you."[137]

I loved the freedom of flying as much as he loved it on his motorcycle. I guess he just figured I'd always be funny in the cockpit. I knew flying was serious business, though - I didn't strafe the house with toilet paper like I could have if I'd wanted to be funny. Jesse still joked about everyone needing to walk around in hard hats, though.

1- 6 Daddy's Home Oct. 23-4, 1987

Danny:

Fulfilling his dream gave Joey even more things he could do. Of course, the image of him as a flight instructor in a few years was not only bizarre to Jesse, who was only slowly accepting Joey's comical, constantly joking nature, it was even strange to me. Still, it was one more thing he might be able to do, if he kept flying single engine planes and getting practice. He wouldn't get a lot of chances, but at least he'd practice from time to time and keep his license.

I was fulfilling my dreams with sportscasting – the Bay Area had had its first playoff team in baseball since 1981, and then there was the NFL players' strike and the 49ers' great season. I realized I was taking on a little too much, probably because I missed Pam. After this weekend, though, I stopped taking on as much extra work, though I did do the one boxing thing, feeling I might have the chance to go national. However, I never got another shot at that, feeling that family was more important.

1- 7 Knock Yourself Out Oct. 30, 1987
1- 8 Jesse's Girl Nov. 6, 1987

D.J. - Nov. 12:

We had a fun birthday party, but with Michelle only a year old, it was really just an excuse for everyone else to eat cake, and for her to try and wear it.

I was less frustrated at how cute everyone said Michelle was, but not like I would have been if I'd been the oldest one after Dad on that floor. I was, however, accepting the fact that some things would be different without Mom here. I didn't have her encouraging me to be more supportive of my sisters, but yet, I started to feel that way because I knew they'd feel the loss, too. I had no clue how to handle that, but it taught me to react by trying to make the best of things, which helped a lot later.

Dad made the best of things, too. He didn't get a chance for any more national sports reports, but he did keep in touch with plenty of area athletes. Boxing was just so easy to start out with on a national stage, he'd decided to try it. However, it wasn't near

[137] "The Wedding, part 1"

his favorite sport. In fact, he turned the channel once when Stephanie was three and saw a couple guys boxing, and she said, "Those men are being very naughty!"

Because of our cousin, baseball was one of his favorites, but basketball was probably his favorite sport. After the promo we did tomorrow, he tended to ask local stars to help with the promos, though here – and later on "Wake Up, San Francisco" - he still used us some. I grew to where I didn't care to be in any ads, though. I fretted too much when it came to my appearance for ads when I was a teen. That comes from Mom, not only in wanting to be the best, but in how much time I spent in the bathroom preparing for stuff.[138] But, I enjoyed the idea when I was a preteen.

Dad used contacts with athletes not only for promos, but also at times if he just needed a good, interesting guest. Once they retire, many athletes would still want to be in the public eye. And, it really helped with things like trying to get tickets to the Hall of Fame when Steph's favorite player, Ozzie Smith, was inducted.

1-12 Our Very First Promo Nov. 13, 1987

Joey – Nov. 14 - Stephanie, Monster Noises, and Good Behavior:

Steph's doctor had told Danny when she get her shots for Kindergarten in July that we might see a little rebellion just because of Pam's death, but that it would mostly be attention getting stuff like the monster noises mentioned earlier.

However, Steph was very good at school. She never had to sit with her head down for more than five minutes for talking. She did for more time for teasing this boy named Walter, later, and said that was a record for her.[139] She wrote sentences because she took all of my funny glasses to school[140] to draw attention away from hers – I remembered to get them at the end of the year - but overall she was always very well behaved in school and pretty good at home, because she was always so sensitive.

1-9 The Miracle of Thanksgiving Nov. 26, 1987

Danny - Nov. 27 – Still Missing Pam:

Christmas shopping would be easier in a way, but harder in another way. Easier because there were more of us, harder because I'd be doing it without Pam's excitement at finding "the perfect thing" so often, or her jumping for joy as we decorated.

We talked about her all the time. I almost never slept with Mr. Bear, as Stephanie preferred him in her room at night. Of course, at times I did, and other times he was in mine during the day. Still, a large part of me missed Pam tremendously. As I'd told Jesse, sometimes a person felt it years later. The minister said during her funeral that we do not mourn like those who have no hope. We were still going to mourn, though.

Jesse – The Basement Apartment, Why Not The Attic?:

It really got to Danny when the check came from the driver's estate. Now it would be easy to make a place for Joey in the garage, which became a basement apartment. It even got its own bathroom, with a small stairway exiting onto the outside. We closed that exit off so my recording studio could be a bit more soundproof later.

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[138] "Stephanie Plays the Field," Pam was like this, too ("Lust in the Dust")

[139] "Nerd For A Day" - 15 minutes wasn't a record for not talking in general, but for sitting with her head down and not talking.

[140] "Stephanie Gets Framed"

He had to dip into his own savings, as well. We'd be rushing it, but he had things planned like clockwork. It was one time his obsession with planning made sense.

We could have used the attic, and kept stuff in the crawlspace above it, but Danny was still a bit sad to plan to put anyone in the attic earlier before Becky and I.[141]

1-10 Joey's Place Fri. Nov. 27-Sat. Dec. 12, 1987

Stephanie – Michelle's (was Steph's) Toddler Playgroup:

Joey even filled Mom's role when it came to the toddler playgroup. Some other mothers watched Michelle and gave Joey a break most afternoons, and he'd helped watch the other kids. His entertainment was a different style, more of a comedian than the maternal caretaker Mom had been. However, the kids loved him. It was great preparation for when he worked with kids as Ranger Joe.

The other kids were older; mostly three or four years old, and lived in the blocks around us. The playgroup had begun when I was two or so, and Mom met a number of other mothers with kids. It was just a couple moms at first, but it grew by the time I was four into five mothers who each took one day a week.

Joey had to ask one of the other mothers to switch days with him a few times, or one of them asked him, so it wasn't the same day all the time, even that first year. By fall, a couple of the kids were in Kindergarten, and the mothers didn't split the week up with Joey like they had, though once in a while one would call and ask if we could watch their kid while they went to the doctor or something.

Joey - Dec. 14 – Danny's new will:

Danny shocked me today, naming me, instead of Jesse, legal guardian if anything happened to him. Jesse talked him into doing that because he wanted some freedom, and felt he would be better able to stay home while I worked, too.[142] Once he and Becky married, Danny changed it after a while, but only when they were confident they could handle it with five kids, since the twins came sooner than they'd planned.

Danny:

I'd done lots of thinking, pondering my birthday, Christmas decorations and all the other things associated with running a family. Nick and Irene had been the alternate plan, but things were different now. Joey had even gotten his pilot's license. He knew how to make sound judgments as far as the girls were concerned.

1-11 The Big Three-O Tues. Dec. 15, 1987

Danny - Sat. Dec. 19:

We finally got around to decorating for Christmas, but all our thoughts were on Pam. Eventually, the girls decided that even thought it would remind them of how lonely it was without Pam, we had to do it. It just wouldn't be Christmas otherwise.

D.J. and Stephanie were teaching Michelle to freeze. It's a great rule, a single

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[141] "Take My Sister, Please" mentions a crawlspace above the attic after it's become an apartment. Sadness over losing Pam is a very realistic reason for Danny not thinking of the idea in "Divorce Court," "Joey's Place," or other times.

[142] This is a likely scenario, as he'd start to feel some of the pressure before "The Seven Month Itch" and want freedom, and he'd know he lied about graduating and that Joey would be better working.

word that you teach means a person must stop all movement. We all gave her so many hugs and cuddled her when she stopped and turned to us upon hearing "freeze," it was really starting to work.

D.J.:

We had to watch Michelle closely, especially around the Christmas tree; she couldn't climb yet, but she could pull it down if we weren't careful.

Stephanie was a little concerned, but she got like that because of Mom's passing. "D.J., are you sure there's no problem? Daddy doesn't want to put her in timeout."

"Steph, relax, she's only thirteen months old. She wouldn't understand discipline at her age." Stephanie wavered. "Trust me; I'll let you know if we have a problem."

She hummed, and finally said, "Okay. If you say so."

I had to laugh. Stephanie really didn't understand what kids could be expected to do, but she was learning. She was always quite good, though she continued to talk a lot. She almost always stopped when told, though.

Stephanie – Mon., Dec. 21 – Bands, and the Rest of the Story:

Uncle Jesse had put together several bands for others, as well as his own. Next month, an old girlfriend from one stopped by. But, soon he'd be part of something with one band you'd never think he'd be a part of. What it was is the rest of the story.

With Christmas so close, this was one of few times I just started crying. The teacher sent for D.J., who gladly came from the cafeteria to comfort me. We cuddled outside the door, and I said I was sorry she was missing her lunch.

"That's okay," she said. "We're both missing something far more important."

As we cuddled, she said she and her friends started a band; the Bracelets.[143] The name wasn't just about friendship bracelets. A bracelet was Mom's gift to D.J. when Michelle came home. Her band played for about a year before losing interest.

Meanwhile, Uncle Jesse had met a nineteen-year-old in a music store named Ginger. He tried to impress ladies by letting them see him with Michelle; that's how he and Ginger met. She and her friends wanted to form a band, the Ginger Girls.[144]

He thought, "Cool, a rock and roller," and wooed Ginger. He gave guitar lessons, songwriting advice, and other things connected with putting together a band and getting gigs. "Write about what you love, what your audience loves," he told them. He was surprised they didn't want to play the "Smash Club" someday, but figured it was lack of confidence, so he tried to promote Ginger far more. Guess what?

In the middle of all that wooing, he forgot to find out what kind of music she liked. It turned out she had six younger siblings, loved to baby-sit – which was why she was attracted by him and Michelle – and wanted to play what he called "kiddie songs." By New Years she'd decided Uncle Jesse wasn't her type.

The Ginger Girls only put out a few kids' albums. By the time Michelle was in fourth grade, these local girls went to schools, played a few songs, and talked about pursuing your dreams, no matter what. But, they did manage one hit.

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[143] "But Seriously, Folks"

[144] Books "If I Were President" & "How To Meet A Superstar" mention them, but the Spice Girls weren't big in fall of 1995, when these events happen. See Book Universe for what happens, for here, it's enough to say they're not hugely popular.

See, they took Uncle Jesse's advice. And their first song was one the Bracelets played a few times. D.J. and her friends really liked it, and later D.J. sang it with Michelle quite a bit. With Michelle? Oh, yes, it was our Elvis loving uncle, the die-hard rock and roller who tried to be macho and told some girls to write about what they loved, thinking it had to be what he loved, too. It was he who inspired them to write and produce "Lollipops and Gummi Bears."[145] And now you know the rest of the story.

1-13 Sister Love	Sat. Jan. 2-6, 1988
1-14 Half a Love Story	Sat. Jan. 9, 1988

Jesse – Jan. 15 - Stephanie learns to tell time:

Stephanie really wanted to learn how to tell time, since she already knew so much. We tried to figure out when would be the best time to teach her. Of course, it's best to just let a kid learn naturally, on their terms, with something like that, as long as it's not something they have to do, but that wasn't our style.

As it turned out, the perfect time came, when she had chicken pox. She needed something to occupy herself. So, Joey and I helped her learn to tell time; Joey even did the voice of a clock, though I don't know how anyone would know what one sounds like.

D.J. had learned about the same age, with Pam and Danny helping. Michelle waited till she was seven. She kind of wanted to, but was too busy playing to have lots of interest, and early on she tended to give up on things a bit if they were too tough. Besides, Michelle figured someone could always tell her the time.

Danny – Jan. 23 – Impressed with D.J.'s Dedication, and the Slumber Party:

D.J. helped, too, but the main one she watched was Michelle. She didn't want to think about that slumber party with Pam – she was trying to hold it in so Steph wouldn't be sad, as she'd done before, because she was thinking about holidays and her birthday. It would come out when her birthday came next month. Besides, this was supposed to be special; the first one without an adult there every step of the way.

Her staying home is a sign we didn't have an ordinary preteen. We had one who wanted to be the best, and who was determined to help however she could. Not every child thinks about the needs of a family in this spot, or thinks about the future at all. Yes, it would have taken a special calling to be proactive, though that was possible. And, I never wanted to push my girls into anything. So, I let her go at her own pace.

It's a good thing. I was having problems with grieving myself because of Pam's death that – had I pushed her – might have meant I put a lot of stuff on her that I could have handled. My ignoring stuff later led to some of that being laid on her, but I did a fair amount myself, too.

1-15 A Pox in Our House	Fri. Jan. 22-23, 1988

D.J. - Thurs.. Jan. 29 – Chicken pox, building relationship with Michelle:

It's almost like God planned that time with Michelle when the others had chicken pox, so I'd have the start of a mothering relationship, since I never tried to be a mother figure. The guys took longer to recover from chicken pox, since they were older. I hung out with Michelle, and liked it. I could make Michelle sit with just a raised voice and

[145] "Our Very First Telethon"

pointing. Lovingly teaching her to listen to me would be crucial later.

There were other things to do, too. Kimmy and I had had sleepovers for a year, and we wanted to have a slumber party. I'd gone to the one with Mom, but at my age I didn't consider that a slumber party anymore, since I'd been with her. So, I would get one for my eleventh birthday. Steph and Michelle stayed with our grandparents.

Uncle Jesse loved sharing about Mom with Steph, and did a great job with Michelle, too. If I'd been in his shoes, getting her up all the time and such, I'd have matured faster. But, there were things I wanted to do for myself.

Stephanie – On grieving:

I didn't have my short crying spells any more. Children grieve differently than adults because they don't understand things like time, past and present, fantasy versus reality, and so on very well. As our minds mature, we grieve more like adults.

D.J. was willing to help me when I cried at school. It only happened a few times, but if I was thinking about Mom, I'd get teary, and the teacher sent me to the nurse with D.J. meeting me there, or D.J. would come down to the classroom to comfort me. She'd promised I could go right down the hall and get her, so I told the teacher right where she was. I never had any other problems at school, though, since I was so verbal.

D.J. started to back off a bit once we were past that stage. By now, we talked about Mom without feeling the loss that much. However, she really felt it on her birthday; first birthdays, anniversaries, and so on are always hardest.

Joey – Feb. 1:

I'd been going with a second grade teacher. We were good friends, but nothing romantic developed. I guess, like Jesse, I'd just wanted something to happen too fast.

The problem was, I expected to get even more offers after that college campus exposure. When that big break didn't come, I got discouraged too fast. With Danny making me guardian if something happened, I was too anxious to become a breadwinner, whereas I might have had more patience after one bomb otherwise.

1-16 But Seriously Folks Mon. Feb. 2-5, 1988

Jesse - Tue. Feb. 9 – Joey working, Oat Boats mention:

Joey's attempt to enter the workforce netted several job offers. Ironically, one was at a local radio station where we would later work. He'd ranked high in his college class.

We knew we'd need to find a sitter if Joey went to work full time. Thankfully, Joey went back to doing comedy and being home. His heart just wasn't in anything but comedy then. Steph certainly couldn't bring home the bacon, she would only do one more Oat Boats ad, this one with D.J..

Danny: Offer From Playgroup Mom, and Nannies

I didn't want my baby in a daycare center. I wanted someone permanent, with Pam having died recently, who would care for her personally. We didn't want to impose on the mothers in Michelle's playgroup to watch her all day that one week; we just said Joey would be unavailable on his normal day, and Jesse took the week off.

One playgroup mom offered to open up her house to make extra money when she learned we might need daycare. We accepted. However, we'd need a center for a couple

weeks, as she arranged her schedule. After that, the older girls could have gone there after school, as it was rather close, and she would be permanent – no staff turnover to cause confusion – in the more personal setting I wanted. Her child would be in Kindergarten next year, so then it'd be even more one-on-one.[146]

We'd do that if needed, but what I really wanted - if the guys both worked - was a nanny. After all, one of us might have fallen in love with one.

Okay, I could have, but I used too many excuses not to date early on, even a few years after Pam died. I didn't want to face all the imperfections, not after I'd known what I felt was the perfect woman. And, in a way, I was scared of another loss. What if I married again and my new wife died like Pam?

I made initial contacts, along with checking centers for short term child care. I knew a few athletes who used nannies, and got recommendations for those and home daycares. After preliminary checks, I had narrowed it to a few ladies who I'd call and interview if needed. Each was warm, gentle, and understanding, just like Pam.

We didn't need one, but I was ready, like when the guys went into advertising. Nannies would be expensive, but with good incomes we could have managed.

D.J. - Fri. Feb. 12 - D.J.'s 11th birthday party:

Dad was anxious to make this one special. And, we'd done well with Steph's birthday party, so we all figured mine would go well, too – or so we thought.

I'd gotten too used to holding it in so Stephanie wouldn't cry, including at her birthday party. But, in the middle of mine, I just couldn't take it any more. I hid in Uncle Jesse's room till Dad and he found me, and we cried together for quite a while. We looked through photo albums and everything for what seemed like a long time.

Kimmy came up to join us, and bugged Uncle Jesse by making comments about his hair. It was just like how Dad would start to find her annoying soon with her teasing. And Stephanie - well, Kimmy had brought a sack of coal over as a joke before Christmas. I had a long talk with Kimmy later about how she teased people sometimes.

Kimmy had apologized, but it was hard for Stephanie to forgive, at her age.[147] I helped her stop hating Kimmy when we talked, but they kept teasing each other. Kimmy had trouble seeing why it was bad to tease, though after a while they did it for fun, not for real. I guess part of it was because kids teased Kimmy so much. But, as I told her, I got teased, too. I was still the only blonde in that fifth grade class.

Eventually, we went back downstairs, to discover Joey entertaining my friends. Thankfully, though it was a pajama party, he didn't wear his Scooby Doo pajamas. We had a blast camping out in the living room, eating pizza, and all that good stuff.

1-17 Danny's Very First Date	Feb. 19, 1988
1-18 Just One of the Guys	Mar. 4, 1988

Joey – Feb. 26 – Cousin Steve and Stanford:

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[146] Given Danny's character, surely what he'd want. Danny would want more one-on-one care with a nanny or home daycare. Not only most realistic with Pam having just died, they just aired the playgroup one. Still, it makes sense they looked for a center short-term. A playgroup mom would need time to plan to open her home all day, all week, rather than a few hours one day, rearranging schedules and all.

[147] Steph doesn't tease her at first in the series, but only in "Just One of the Guys" does she say she hates her, so such a joke would have had to occur. Some feel this takes place closer to Christmas, but his baseball scholarship to Stanford likely wouldn't be learned about till around the air date.

Danny's oldest sister's son got a baseball scholarship to Stanford. He never would have made it without one; it's a very tough school academically. Football and basketball players learn about theirs earlier. Danny did a story on local players signing national letters of intent – officially stating which school they're going to – last month. The date for signing them is months later for baseball players, though. Baseball scholarships are offered around February normally. Strudels are only baked in the form of the Wise Men then if you're as odd as Kimmy, though.

We tried to encourage Steve too much, with his dad having moved out, but Danny was like that sometimes. He didn't always say the right things, either. But, at least it matches how he doted on his own girls so much at times.

D.J. had just taken her first babysitting course, since she was eleven. We wanted to encourage her by letting her watch the others for an hour. She wasn't thinking about Pam, thankfully; she usually did pretty well at putting that behind her.

Steve had to check out the school, and others that had offered him scholarships, so he got a few days off from high school. We were really excited, and he and D.J. still found time to do really fun stuff together later.

Stephanie: The Knuckleball, and Cousin Steve's career:

I'd tried knuckleballs just playing in the backyard. Steve taught me once I decided to play.[148] Dad drove me down to Stanford to see him. I learned fast. It can be thrown gripping it with the knuckles, like one of the first to throw it did, or the fingertips.

You don't know where it's going. It's easy on the arm, but very hard to master. You have to throw it with no spin. If it rotates once or more, tiny currents caused by everything – like what causes leaves to flutter down on a calm day - can't act on it, and it's just slow and straight. Most who throw it specialize in it, because it takes constant repetition. You need big hands for that grip – Steve grew more in college, he was 6'4" when he finally stopped; some kids have a growth spurt at 18 or 19.

It encouraged Steve a lot to see me do well. I pitched a bit in Middle School, but by then, I couldn't fool hitters with it as much, since they were better and I hadn't practiced as much. Plus, my other skills weren't as good.

Once he got into the minors, his other pitches weren't great, so he learned to rely more and more on the knuckleball. He helped the Cubs win the World Series as a starter, in the first decade of the 2000s.[149] Two expansions meant plenty more jobs, which kept him dreaming while he bounced between the majors and minors after his first call-up to the bigs in '95. He was traded once. Then, Tampa's expansion team drafted him in '98. Few master it, but he eventually developed a big league knuckleball, becoming one of a few good knuckleball specialists each generation sees. He pitched for four different big league clubs, and started into his forties because of the lack of wear on his arm, the same reason he threw more complete games than most. A good comparison would be Charlie

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[148] She throws this in "Stephanie Plays the Field," plus it's mentioned in "The Dating Game" – she throws an okay on at first in the former, and would likely have tried throwing it earlier.

[149] He'd give good, veteran presence in 2003, so they may not have to trade Dontrelle Willis, though that part is debatable. Steve either wins game 1 of the NLCS out of the bullpen (so it's a 4-game Cub sweep) or, as a knuckleballer, he relieves in game 7. In 2001, 2004, and 2007, other clubs were too dominant; 2001 is a touch early, anyway, as he'd likely just be getting really good. 2005 is possible only if they don't make the trade and they can beat the White Sox, which is unlikely. So, he gets the Cubs the win in 2003. While this was written before the Cubs won in 2016, it's still nice to show a desire to finally get them a win.

Hough, though Steve bounced around as a starter, too, not just in the bullpen.

1-19 The Seven-Month Itch (1) and
1-20 The Seven-Month Itch (2) Mar. 11-2, 1988

Jesse - Sun., Mar. 20 – Struggling to grow:

I wanted to do right by Pam, and be her replacement. I wasn't perfect; I helped Michelle stop sucking her thumb by giving her carrots or something, though by now she didn't, anyway; none of the girls did for long, nor did my kids.[150] But, I was doing well enough. I just hadn't realized the cost of becoming a family man. I meant it when I said I would, but something was pulling me back toward my old ways.

There's a process called sanctification - another word for spiritual growth - that happens after a person receives Christ. I'd already been sanctified, meaning set apart, as a child of God when I received His gift. God wanted to keep setting me apart away from my old ways and closer to Him. So, the process of being sanctified is called spiritual growth. He has a part in it, but I had a role to play, too, in my growth.

Anyway, I was flunking one of my first tests in it, just as I would flunk pride and other tests later. Sadly, I didn't mature very fast. I was still part of God's family, nothing could change that. However, the old me was too used to rebelling.

By the time I got back, I realized that being there with Danny and the girls filled me with joy I couldn't get elsewhere. Being dedicated to family meant I had something much more special than that freedom I thought I'd loved so much.

If I'd gone and stayed away, I might have had fun for a while. But, I would have been more and more miserable on the inside, till God got through to me. He still would have loved me, though, and forgiven me. Unconditional love is something Danny showed all the time, too. That was the best part of being there.

Danny - Disneyland trips:

The airline had to refund or exchange our tickets.[151] We went to Disneyland April 17 this year. We didn't want to get tired of it, but every couple years seemed good.

Disneyland is 5-6 hours by car, but only around an hour by plane, from where we lived. It was a common tourist place for folks from our area. We picked a date that wasn't likely to see the airport fogged in for 1990, because flying was easier.

Michelle got her first taste that she could remember well then;[152] she was four months shy of four. She remembered it well for a couple years. By that age, something that big will be remembered by a child, but they might not be able to pinpoint when it happened, only that they were there. Stephanie was old enough to enjoy it while also realizing it was make believe. She loved kidding D.J. about looking for a double date with Cinderella. D.J. was just glad I didn't make them clean like her stepsisters. As rough as it was to have to handle Michelle, D.J. knew it could be a lot worse.

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[150] They likely use thumbs, not pacifiers; one clue may be Michelle when she acts like a baby in "Three Men and Another Baby." Some use neither; if these did when we don't see, it wasn't for long.

[151] The trip was cancelled in "The Seven Month Itch 1," but they'd gotten there by "Our Very First Christmas Show." The airline always gives that choice when weather cancels a flight, though it's more likely they'd simply give free tickets for a later flight. So, either the Tanners got their money back and go some other time, or more likely they'd get tickets for a later date. Either one works, and proves that vacations, like shopping, school, etc, happen between episodes.

[152] "Double Trouble" – Michelle says Disneyland is the happiest place in the world.

Michelle was actually very well behaved there in 1990; the size awed her. She wasn't as bold as two and a half years later at the Florida one; that was brought on by Danny having taken the reins and then being so lax.

Stephanie – Mar. 28 – Play wedding, Jesse & Joey's silliness:

Even though it was just pretend – a wedding of letters Q and U that our Kindergarten class put on – Dad got nervous about me playing the letter Q. We had lots of fun, and Joey and Dad battled to see who could tell more letter jokes. Later, Kimmy said, "Do you really think D.J.'s going to go off and marry some letter? Although if she does, maybe they could adopt an 'A,' I could use some."

Joey:

It was ironic that Jesse chided me about my constant comedy. Danny's the one who got so emotional that "one of his little letters" was getting married. Later, he waxed nostalgic about the time when Stephanie didn't even know the letter "U." I wrote a ceremony – our church's minister had something else come up - with lots of words with "qu," at the start, because that was the exercise, teach students about the importance of those letters together in the alphabet. At the end, they exchanged quarters.

I think Jesse just wanted to tease me because he didn't want to think about me looking smarter than him. Stephanie had entered his room and told him, "U and I are getting married," and it turned into an Abbott and Costello routine. Then, when they were both thoroughly confused – Stephanie had just finished saying, "But, you and I aren't getting married, U and I are getting married" – I happened to walk into Jesse's room. I comprehended what was happening right away.

Jesse still has a hard time understanding how I did that. I guess it's just my nature to understand such silly things. At least by this point, he was glad to be part of things again. The girls loved having Jesse back. And, he was even willing to be a little silly, just as long as it wasn't in public.

Danny – On Joey filling Pam's role:

Both guys did great. Jesse was learning wonderful lessons on how much fun it was to nurture and care for others. Joey knew that; he was trying to be more of a leader. Joey would have been the first one to coach D.J.'s soccer team, if Jesse hadn't been so intent on trying to be like Pam at the start of the season. Still, Joey had lots of fun cheering from the sidelines, and even tried to create this comical mascot that sounded like Bullwinkle, but it never took off. He wanted to be into every activity. D.J. thought he was kind of silly at times, but he was always fun to have around.

He did accidentally throw away a soccer ball D.J. scored her first goal with during spring cleaning this year,[153] but it wasn't even blown up, so he had no clue what it was. It was on a hook in the garage, because some stuff in their room had had to go once Steph moved in with D.J.. Then, he got his own room, and it was just laying around there.

He also ruined Stephanie's art project later. He was concentrating on a comedy routine, and was looking for something to sit on while posing as a statue of The Thinker. So, he sat on President Harding's head; or at least a paper mache one.[154]

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[153] "Tanner vs. Gibbler"

[154] "Too Little Richard, Too Late"

With Steph and Michelle, he loved to have fun. He knew kids loved cartoons and voices. He encouraged Steph to keep watching such things a little longer than she would have, since it was more normal to her;[155] same with Michelle. Being silly was natural, and may have made Steph feel a bit more need to distance herself from such things in middle school than she might have, though she wasn't watching Sesame Street after age nine. It also made it easier for them to laugh things off better with him.

On the other hand, he took his need to be a leader seriously enough to be hard on himself if he failed. It took Steph's joke after Joey did that to her project for him to realize she wasn't going to holler at him; she simply remarked that, "Harding wasn't that great a president. At least you didn't sit on Lincoln." Once they joked about it a few minutes, he willingly put it back together, though he was still apologetic later that spring. Her class was putting together a display of Presidents with paper mache, and she'd picked Harding because she was really getting into boys, and people back then said he "looked like a President," so she figured that meant he was good looking. Though, nobody looks good in paper mache.

Stephanie – Joey and cartoons:

Of course, I liked to play pretend, too. Mom hadn't used the TV as a babysitter, but on the other hand, neither did Joey, really. Watching cartoons was something we did together, and we would actually discuss them. So, while we all had some Jesse influence, especially Michelle, I had a little closer relationship with Joey. He actually managed to use cartoons as teachable moments about life; same with Sesame Street. He liked to act silly, but talked more intelligently about them than he let on.[156]

1-21 Mad Money Apr. 8, 1988

Jesse – Stephanie's New Bike, Honeybee Purchases:

Danny had a few more money troubles because of Pam's passing, though those cleared up quickly once all the insurance and everything came in; that stuff can take lots of time. However, when Stephanie was raising money for the Honeybees, he could only buy 38 cases of honey from Stephanie - 17 the first time and 21 over a couple more days. Steph didn't win the Honeybee fundraising competition – a club something like Brownies - but she got a new bike from Joey today, anyway.[157]

Danny always got really psyched up about helping the girls, but I think even he realized that buying over a hundred jars of honey from D.J. was too much. We wound up donating quite a bit of it to a local children's hospital. Danny always loved giving little bits to charity, and that hospital was one of his favorites.[158]

He bought about the same number for Michelle as he'd bought for Stephanie. Because of the timing, Michelle's Kindergarten year, she just got into Honeybees, then. She didn't win the bike, either, but she used the one she learned to ride on till she outgrew it around when she turned seven.

Joey – On Danny being confused:

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[155] "The Hole in the Wall Gang," Steph still watches Sesame Street; it was more for ages 5-8 then.
[156] Such as the interview, as Ranger Joe, where he talks about cartoon violence
[157] Stephanie is so excited about her bike, she likely didn't win earlier.
[158] Book, "Fastest Turtle in the West" mentions it specifically, quite a few others mention giving to charity.

Danny was a wonderful dad, but he could be confused in his organization. He'd get talks crossed between Jesse and Stephanie once later.[159] So, it figured he'd mix up my age when he was torn between saying I was almost thirty-one and that I was thirty.[160] He'd just thrown a picture into Michelle's baby book without thinking, when he saw it laying around once, and it turned out to be an embarrassing one that didn't belong there, one of her sitting in the corner for timeout.[161] Stephanie had taken it to blackmail her with just in case, like with embarrassing pictures such as D.J. with the mumps.[162]

Stephanie - Fri. Apr. 17 – Going to Disneyland on Refunded Tickets:

We went to Disneyland today – the California park, not the Florida one. We'd planned to fly out a month earlier, but the flight was cancelled because of fog. So they refunded our tickets, and gave us the choice of exchanging them for another date.

Things were working out very well. I was learning how things could still work out, even if it looked really bad. I'd had the chance to be a little frustrated that they hadn't, and get over it, and now, we were there. I had lots of fun, and Uncle Jesse got to spend more time with a girl and his band.

1-22 D.J. Tanner's Day Off May 16, 1988

D.J. - May 17 – Mother's Day tougher than she'd let on:

I didn't want to tell anyone; everyone was so happy. Mother's Day came and went on May 8th without a major hitch - Grandma Irene was around to honor. We tried to have fun times with her, though they were subdued, till Becky came here and she and Jesse got married and had kids. Same with Dad's mom. However, once she had Nicky and Alex, Becky was the one we did fun stuff with for Mother's Day.

I still felt the loss, though, this first Mother's Day. I recalled Mom taking me to learn to ride horses when I was seven, and now she wasn't here, though. I thought of how she'd been so excited on the sidelines when I started playing soccer at eight. Sure, Uncle Jesse rode with me, even a little after Becky came into the picture; he'd learned how since she died.[163] He coached my soccer team this year and next, too.

Still, I kept thinking that he just wasn't Mom. At times, I wanted Steph's honesty; she would just ask if things were normal right away.[164] That's one reason why I skipped school once. I had a chance to get this star's autograph, and I wanted to try one of Uncle Jesse's tricks. I kept thinking, Mom would know I was doing this. I guess it really showed that I wanted her there to stop me.

Joey - May 19:

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[159] "Joey, Stacy, and…Oh, Yeah, Jesse" - where the puppy Comet chews on Mr. Bear

[160] "Mad Money" – It's not likely they were in fourth in the "Pal Joey" flashback, Danny's very precise. He read the date as 1968 and recalled it was fifth grade. "Mad Money" is a more likely time for him to get mixed up. This makes the ages more logical compared to Pam. Joey's evil twin says he's 33 in "Double Trouble." Likely, Joey was born in '58 and pushed ahead a year by an overly demanding dad.

[161] "Happy Birthday Babies 1" – sitting in timeout is not the normal baby book picture, especially for them; he may have wanted to forget he'd waited that long to punish her, especially because this had to be a later punishment, anyway, as will be shown later.

[162] "Crushed"

[163] "Breaking Up Is Hard to Do (in 22 minutes)" Explains riding ability in finale, "D.J.'s Very First Horse."

[164] As she does when Joey is ironing and making strange noises while doing it in "Joey's Place."

Jesse and I left it to Danny to say for certain how long she was grounded. I guess, in some ways, I didn't even think of myself as an adult. Part of me felt being an adult meant giving up all my jokes and everything. I didn't want to do that. Only much later would I learn I could keep being silly.

It would have helped if I had punished her here, though. She knew she deserved to be grounded this time, while the time she was out past curfew and didn't call was trickier. Still, it was mostly her attitude next fall. Even then I would have just said no TV after giving it some thought if she hadn't had the attitude then.[165]

For now, though, I had maturity problems like Jesse. It took me a while to realize it was okay to send someone to their room or ground them. I didn't even like putting someone in timeout, so I didn't. I fell in line with Jesse and Danny as far as not wanting to discipline Michele, although I got better at setting limits with the others after a while.

Danny – How Michelle Was Taught Limits:

None of us guys liked setting limits for Michelle. It was necessary, though, and it was far easier than punishing her. She learned what "no" meant pretty well for her age. "No" to running away from Daddy in the parking lot meant Daddy carried her and she couldn't walk. "No" to opening something she shouldn't meant she didn't get any. Those limits, I easily enforced, though I never considered punishing with timeouts or actually taking away privileges. Punishment isn't as effective at this age; if it starts like with Steph it has to be for one thing, and very little.

D.J., on the other hand, was willing to say "no" quite firmly. She didn't need to yet, but she set the stage for being able to punish successfully by playing with her a lot when she was grounded, then later, during the summer.

This is when she started to have a serious enough bond she was number two to Jesse. Jesse was still that mother figure, but Michelle was beyond separation anxiety. She seemed very content. She listened to Jesse, seeming to think he could hang the stars in the sky. Just like she did me, and like the girls had felt about Pam and I at that age. And, thankfully, she saw D.J. that way some, too. Just not nearly like she could have.

Jesse - Mon., May 30 - Memorial Day – Back to Katsopolis:

While Joey struggled with enforcing rules, I kept thinking about my own future after the anniversary of Pam's death. I finally made an announcement at the picnic table.

"Pop, remember when I asked Papouli and Pam for a favor, to help convince you of something?" I started to get choked up, thinking of her. "I wanted to use a stage name. Anyway…" I inhaled deeply. "Well, I've been doing some thinking. And, I think it's time we drop the last name from the Rippers. We've got enough name recognition." I swallowed another of those lumps the size of Graceland. I could see a few others were teary. "I'm goin' back to bein' Jesse Katsopolis, and not Jesse Cochrane."

I didn't hear the applause. I sat with my head in my hands. My mind was far away. "I wish you could be here, Sis. I wish you could be here to hear this in the worst way," I kept thinking.

Stephanie - June 18:

Once school let out, I had fun doing the normal kid stuff. Uncle Jesse and I loved

[165] "Joey Gets Tough"

to play pretend. I'd seen him yell before, so I wasn't scared so much as just really hard on myself when he broke his arms after getting his hair fixed following my botched pretend haircut. I even punished myself, though it wasn't a realistic punishment. I got being sent to your room and grounded mixed up when I said I was grounding myself till I was an old lady. I guess in the back of my mind, I didn't want to punish myself, so I did it in that silly, "playing house" way kids do when they imitate parents. I just didn't feel like having to sing elevator music was punishment for me like it was for Uncle Jesse.

2-1 Cutting It Close June 18-22, 1988

Jesse – July 4 – Joey Playing Hockey in the House:

My casts came off in early August, and I was as good as new. For now, I was uttering one of those sentences you never expect to hear in English.

"Steph, you know how you're worried about punishing Michelle?" I joked today. "Joey's the one who needs a timeout."

What brought this on? I thought Joey knew better than to play hockey in the house, and was normally more into games like hide and seek. But, he suggested I could "entertain" the girls while my casts were on by being the goalie.

"I'll even let you win," he said as he shot a plastic puck at my leg.

As Danny came in from checking the grill, he saw Joey about to shoot another puck, and Stephanie piped up and said, "Uncle Jesse thinks Joey needs a timeout. Do you want to punish him, or should I?"

"That won't be necessary, Steph," Danny said before asking Joey what in the world he was thinking. He was supposed to be setting a good example for the girls. Even two years later, he'd be telling Michelle it was okay to do it if Danny wasn't home.[166]

It bugged Danny a little, but he got over it fast. He knew Joey was just a big kid. But, he did tease about giving the girls permission to punish Joey. Maybe too much; Joey actually listened when Michelle sent him to his room once.[167] What should I have expected, though? A couple times, Joey would even talk to an imaginary friend.

Joey – His Imaginary Friend:

It wasn't a huge thing; the one in that movie "Harvey" was far different. For instance, Harvey was a six-foot-tall rabbit, mine was a moose that played hockey. He was originally just a moose, but sometime in my childhood, because I loved the Red Wings in our short stay in Detroit, he learned to play hockey.[168]

He was just an encourager, really, not a companion like earlier when I was lonelier for friends. I talked to my imaginary friend like Steph did Mr. Bear in her preteen years, not much, just to feel a little better. I didn't need him around near as much, once I was in a big, happy family, and he'd almost disappeared by about the fifth or sixth year I lived there. By the time I met my future wife in 1995, it was only in my act; I pretended like he was part of it for if I was talking to someone in a joke. I forgot about him as an imaginary friend by the late 1990s.

D.J. - Monday, Aug. 29, 1988 – Difference between D.J., Stephanie:

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[166] "A Pinch For A Pinch" – one of the big signs Joey couldn't have been disciplining Michelle

[167] "Mr. Egghead"

[168] He turns and talks to one in "Rock the Cradle" – we don't know what he is but this fits Joey.

I could take a foreign language for the first time this year. Kimmy wanted to take one, too, so we could share a class together. Hence, we both signed up for Spanish. The first couple nine week periods were easy, but then it got really difficult as we got off of the basic numbers, letters, and so on.

Stephanie was excited, too. They announced that her class would perform the same play I did. She could play "Yankee Doodle" just like me. We knew she'd make it. She'd always had a good singing voice and dance skills.

The only difference was, her Yankee Doodle would be much cuter than mine. I wanted to show off my American pride at her age, and make the audience feel proud, too. She wanted to show off her exuberance and make the audience feel the same way.

In a way, I couldn't blame her - she has Mom's excitability, I have Mom's desire to always be the best. But, I was never into cute. When one of Mom's friends saw me practicing and said how cute I looked at Steph's age, I cried and ran up to my room. I didn't want to be cute. I wanted to be pretty, to be the best, to be sensational. But, I thought cute was for little kids, and to me, first grade wasn't little when I was that age, although it seemed that way to me by sixth.

Mom helped me see that her friend meant no harm back then. But, I still preferred to play it differently than Steph would.

Danny – Steph's Grades, Talking in Class:

One other area in which Steph was like D.J. was really good grades. She'd been reading for a couple years, and was pretty good at a few other things, like math; so, she got her work done fast. That led to her talking a little bit more than she should, though it wasn't a huge problem till later this school year. She would talk about any subject that crossed her mind once she was done with her work. She didn't do this as much till she really caught on to stuff, though, around the first of the year.

The teacher tried to solve it at first by pairing Stephanie with a slower kid so she could help him. She figured it would work off her energy, and it did some, along with perhaps adding a little to her jealousy when D.J. tried to help her friend Harry with arithmetic. Steph liked the fact she could help someone like that.[169]

However, Steph wasn't a whiz at everything, so she quickly learned another skill – repetition. Once she realized talking about things helped her remember, she sometimes just tried to talk about the subjects.

Finally, we helped her realize she had to listen and be quiet in school, and she did – like Jesse said, she could have missed recess if this kept up.[170]

So, D.J. wasn't quite the same as Steph as a student, but Pam's influence had been such that she'd still want to excel, that desire to be the best not ingrained, but still rubbing off on her. However, Michelle wouldn't have that. While she wouldn't fight, there would be a few things that would be clear Jesse influences.

Jesse – Stephanie excited to help, but not too boastful:

Steph was excited to be so smart, like her first day of second grade when she

[169] "Pal Joey." A teacher with a bright student who talks would likely try this, but it's spelling and reading she's best at, and we see no indication that Harry is slow, anyway. He picked it up pretty fast.
[170] "El Problema Grande De D.J."

helped a kid find the cafeteria.[171] But, with a kid like that, she'd read it for them, once they told her they were younger and didn't know how. She only got on Kimmy's case because she was still at the age where things were very concrete. To her, someone D.J.'s age should be as smart as D.J.. Plus, it was clear Kimmy didn't try too hard.

Speaking of Kimmy, she was going to have a birthday party, yet another that her parents just had whenever they wanted. "This is supposed to be my eleventh party, but it's much closer to my twelfth birthday," Kimmy informed her. D.J. had learned never to know what to expect with her, and just to roll with the punches. She didn't even ask, she just planned to throw her the party when Kimmy wanted it.

Becky - Sept. 6, 1988 – Hired in San Francisco:

I got my notice – the station in San Francisco wanted me to come out for another interview. It was one of the first ones I sent my resume to when I began to send them late last November. I was willing to be a reporter then, and mentioned that in my cover letter, but I also highlighted my talk show skills. I really didn't know where I wanted to be eventually, but I would soon fall in love with the area.

I flew out and interviewed Friday, and did really well. They hired me a few weeks later, and I found a house to rent. I'd start in early October. Our show had had their name and image change – now they would face a real change, as I was about to move.

2-2 Tanner vs. Gibbler Oct. 2-3, 1988

Kimmy – First Major Fight:

D.J. and I had never had a real fight before; or, at least, not one this big. Our pillow fights were rare and always just in fun. I went along with a lot of what she did at first because we had some of the same interests - thinking boys were nuts and then starting to like them - and I could learn a lot from her.

However, this time I was so mad by the end, I didn't want to see her bring my gifts over. I asked her to mail them to me. I was taking unfair advantage of her, though, calling her names after she'd been so nice to me; all she wanted to do was keep those girls I brought over from trashing her house.

I guess that's what Mrs. Tanner tried to tell my parents when it came to taking care of our house, now that we owned it. It's important to appreciate things and people in your lives, and not take them for granted.

Of course, D.J. still let me do that with her homework, but that's another story.

I had a really goofy way of looking at the world. I guess that's why Joey never teased me like the others; his way of looking at things was silly, too.

Danny - Wed., Oct. 5 – On the Show, Guests, Gifts, and Hosts:

Our show moved time slots a few times, and even length, simply because cable and the decline in independent stations took their toll.[172] We improved in the ratings, doing as well as an independent station can against network competition.

Guests liked to give us things like books or clothing. I wasn't the world's biggest environmentalist, but when people in those groups heard me brag about my girls, they

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[171] "Back To School Blues"

[172] This happened regularly in real life, so any difference in times or length is not writer error, but simply reflects changing times.

couldn't help but bring t-shirts, especially for Michelle. I wasn't very political, and neither was anyone else in our family. So, we didn't keep any of the other clothes, but I enjoyed coming home with books from people I knew or respected, or a shirt once in a while that talked about saving the earth.[173] I liked a clean planet, after all. The other stuff went to charity; as a family we gave quite a bit.

We had a nice mixture of guests, though we struggled at times for good ones. That helped us have variety, of course. Sumo wrestlers, brain surgeons, celebrity pasta, you name it, we had it at one time or another. Of course, some were a little off the wall, but it was interesting finding out what made them tick, at least; like one who mooned me. That's one of the pitfalls of an independent station.

Becky almost seemed a little too perky for me at times. I shied away from that because it reminded me of Pam and how excited she always was. I liked Becky, but, I still felt uncomfortable getting too close to a woman. After all, we'd be hosting a show and working together five days a week, and preparing some weekends, too.

I was like that with women, though. I usually had Pam in the back of my mind, and thought she'd been so perfect, nobody else would do.

Pam would have liked Becky. I really hoped D.J. would ask her questions about female issues, especially puberty. Boy, was I a nervous wreck about that.

Thankfully, Stephanie distracted my thought processes this evening and asked, "How can two people host the same show?"

"Well," I said thankfully, "It's simple. When one person hosts a show they're a host. When two people host a show they're each a host. But, they're also called co-hosts. It's just like how a show has several stars, so they're each co-stars. You see, co- is a prefix that's used to demonstrate when two things are of like value. Like co-operate, when two or more people are working together. So, I've been given a co-host, she's been given a co-host, and we're each hosts. Does that make sense?"

"I think so. You're co-hosts because you co-operate."

"Well…sort of, yes. That's a good way to put it." I was proud, though she'd just latched onto a word she understood. Still, she could ramble just like me.

D.J.:

Uncle Jesse and Joey weren't Mom, but our house didn't feel quite as empty as it had. It finally felt normal at home again. What Uncle Jesse and Joey did to help us was pretty much like Mom would have done it, I think.

It would have been interesting to see Dad handle the fight Kimmy and I had – sometimes he tried too hard. I didn't realize just how much he hurt inside, though. I let myself go a little with Steph, but I never got really angry with her. And, with Michelle, I was forced to be much more in control emotionally to deal with her. That led to me getting overheated with Dad and others at times to let off steam.

Thankfully, after a lull, our family started talking more about Mom again so Michelle would know about her and Stephanie would remember her better. And, it helped me, too, to remember how gentle and loving she always was.

Danny - Fri. Oct. 7 – Yankee Doodle Stephanie:

Stephanie performed as "Yankee Doodle," and we celebrated afterward. While we

[173] She wears t-shirts talking of saving the planet a few times as a toddler/preschooler

missed Pam, it wasn't the type where you automatically think, "Where is she? It's not right without her," like with all those firsts; even when Steph entered Kindergarten, we didn't think about it a lot, but the thought was there a little. By now, we'd think, "We're so lucky to have each other. She may not be here, but we still have it good."

The first milestones are always difficult, but I knew we'd make it. The problem was, I tried to keep thinking of my baby as a baby. Then, there was Jesse and Joey working, and the problems Jesse would have, and…well, we weren't home free.

2- 3 It's Not My Job	Oct. 27-28, 1988
2- 4 D.J.'s Very First Horse	Oct. 29-November 12, 1988

Becky:

I kept my horse for a couple years, and sold it soon before Jesse and I got married. Stephanie was never that interested in riding, but Michelle was. Horse jumping didn't come till later, mostly because Danny was very protective. You have to ride for a while before you can jump, unless you're a superstar, like Michelle's one friend later.

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2. Houston, We Have a Problem - Nov. 1988-Sept. 1991

Joey – Tues., Nov. 15, 1988 – Checkup, Doctor Says T-Twos to Start:

Today, we were warned of something we thought unimportant that wound up being major. The pediatrician, Dr. Landress, warned Danny the Terrible Twos were upon us. In short, that's where a child senses she has independence. They battle till they know the balance between having a will and the fact they have to obey rules.

It doesn't happen all at once. Michelle had been drifting into it for months. Danny came home and told us about potty training and other things the doctor talked about, but also about the need to discipline. "I'm not ready for this. This is my baby."[174]

"Relax," Jesse said, "I'll talk to her about it; it'll be cool."

"Jess, it's not a matter of just talking. Doctor Landress says we have to set limits; like when we taught her to freeze. And…enforce them. Like with the older ones."

"Danny, if you have trouble, Jesse and I will help for a while; right, Jess?"

I was confident until Jesse reminded me, "Joey, you don't know what you're sayin'; are you ready to make her sit in a chair and have her call you a meanie? You don't even tell D.J. and Stephanie they can't have extra dessert."

"He's right, Joey; you are pretty lax with them," Danny said.

I agreed; I wasn't very confrontational. "Okay, Jess, it'll be your job."

"Are you crazy; I don't wanna become like my old man!"

Danny could see it was going nowhere. "Look, maybe it won't be a problem. Dr. Landress said it's important we start giving timeouts. But, we can wait a little while."

2- 5 Jingle Hell	Nov. 19, 1988

Jesse - Mon. Nov. 21, 1988 - Potty training confusion:

I was flying high; I'd sold several advertising jingles, the band was great, and my

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[174] All pediatricians monitor things like this. Some single parents who suffer loss get like what your "TV pen pal" showed, trying to be the kid's friend. The doctor would stay involved to help in such a situation. As will be shown, someone had to take charge. How the doctor would handle it combines with other things to make what was shown plausible, while the one who stepped in makes it realistic.

dad understood. I didn‘t have to be the next Frank Sinatra to be successful. When Papouli heard I‘d quit Dad‘s business, he agreed I was doing well enough.

Michelle tried to start potty training, but that went nowhere. Most potty training is a false start at first. The kid happens to go, and the adults get overexcited, as Danny and I did. I looked forward to not changing diapers, and I was celebrating every little milestone like Pam had. But, after a while, it's often too tough to be consistent all day, because the kid's too young to do it successfully. So, everyone backs off.[175]

That was especially true with Michelle. Not only is 24 months kind of young to be starting, but Danny got too anxious. He bought this really fancy potty, with more bells and whistles than some cars come with. And, he kept asking her if she wanted to go at an age when every other word was "no" anyway. An even larger percent of her words would have been "no" if she didn't say "cookie" so much.

Seriously, this one was the false start most kids have. Michelle started to try and wear her potty chair as a hat, and after a while we knew it just wouldn't happen this time. We could see a light at the end of the tunnel, though.

Late next spring, we were successful. After a while the family had this ceremony where Michelle dropped the last box of diapers in the trash, and Joey and I started doing a touchdown celebration dance of some sort. It looked really corny, but when I started bragging about that, I could see I had really become like Pam.

Back to this point in our history, as Thanksgiving neared, I had a huge problem. I could freelance, but to work for a major advertising firm, I needed a diploma. I'm not just talking high school - I did some research, and realized I probably needed a college one. They liked what we sent them, but they needed some history before they hired us.

I was upset - didn't they care about the little guy like me who was struggling to make a buck? There had to be a way to make this work, though. As long as I sold enough jingles, had enough success with my music, it wouldn't matter, would it? I mean, Elvis could have worked in advertising. Who wouldn't want him?

D.J. – Radio contests:

While Uncle Jesse succeeded with jingles, I made a connection involving the Beach Boys that would be instrumental in his future.

I started by winning concert tickets. I'd won them before I even thought of asking if I could go - I'd been grounded for a few weeks starting the 12th. Dad said I could if I gave up something else, and I did. He was always fair about such things.

I loved contests. It was my first win, but I'd tried to call so much I'd memorized the station's number. I'm glad they let kids win on that station; not all stations do.

2-6 Beach Boy Bingo Nov. 25-6, 1988

Stephanie - Fri., Nov. 25, 1988 – D.J.'s horse, lost privileges, etc.:

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[175] Hence Michelle announces on the phone that she went potty in "Jingle Hell," but doesn't train till late, when in "Blast From the Past" she again announces it over the phone like it's a big deal.

Michelle trained by age three; D.J. says she'd been trained in "And They Call It Puppy Love." She says she has to go in "A Pinch For A Pinch." Some fans noticed one of the girls playing Michelle in a diaper later. The other is not, though, and the one may only be due to long hours of taping, if what they think they saw is right. For that alone it must be seen as not true of the character, only of one performer. More importantly, though, the story being told must rule, and it says she was trained.

D.J. wasn't allowed to watch us for a while because of that horse. She almost couldn't when Dad and the others had a date downstairs later,[176] because of that trade and because Dad had said he would have trouble trusting her again for a while.[177]

Dad needed help, though. He simply told Michelle to paint on her easel and hadn't even taken the paints away when she painted on her dresser.[178] I thought out loud that evening, "Isn't he supposed to put her in timeout?"

D.J. assured me that there was still no problem, though she was starting to worry. Dad hadn't even complained about paint on his clothes. "Dad's very fair about working things out, like with the concert. Maybe he can tell Michelle coloring is only done on paper, and she'll listen. You never colored on walls or furniture."

"No. I was too busy climbing them," I supposed.

"See, it'll be okay. I promise, I'll tell you if we have a problem."

Danny - Nov. 26 – Not Correcting Michelle:

I've always tried to be very flexible in how I punish. But, with Pam gone, I often felt something was missing. The guys filled in wonderfully in setting limits. However, they were the same way I was with Michelle.

Well, they weren't quite like I was. They just wanted to have fun and be her friend because Pam wasn't there. I wanted Pam to be there, and pretended she was so I didn't have to correct Michelle except sometimes to say things were wrong.

Jesse – The Beach Boys:

The concert was incredible. We got to meet the Beach Boys, and man, did we have a jam session. Danny met them before they were to come on "Wake Up, San Francisco" and they'd heard about Pam. They wanted to do something special, with our situation and it being Thanksgiving. That and Danny's friendliness made them willing to hang out with us, though they'd been fogged in and couldn't be on his show.

Stephanie was a bit young to follow performers. However, she knew all the words to a few of their songs. She'd even danced to Kokomo in her last recital. I think my not being pushy led to them warming up to us more than they would have. Either that, or the girls were just so cute.

D.J. - Mon., Nov. 28, 1988 – Why Kimmy's not at the concert:

Today, I learned just how little Kimmy thought at times. After trying to get me to take her to the concert, she went to the mall to meet a boy at the food court. She grabbed an expensive hat to impress him. She planned to put it back when she was done, but they called her parents, and she was grounded for the concert.

She met him again weeks later, and wound up coming home in a squad car![179] On what they called a "date," his older brother picked Kimmy up, and dropped them at the food court. They ate, saw a movie, and talked loud. She followed his lead in a food fight with patrons, and with mall police as the mess escalated. It's a good thing these were

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[176] "Triple Date" - her skipping curfew the week before and being grounded may have played a role, too

[177] "D.J.'s Very First Horse"

[178] "Beach Boy Bingo"

[179] "The Dating Game," a year older than Steph's "first date" so she'd think of that as a date, even if it was just going to the mall before coming "home in a police car."

mostly Junior High students and adults, or things could have been quite ugly.

She was grounded and never allowed to see him again. I helped hold her to that. She never rode in another squad car, but would talk about how exciting it was. She figured it could happen again, so called it her first ride in one.

It made me think - this is what Mom warned me about. After Steph's innocent mistake about what "Buy now, pay later" means, a saleslady assumed we'd had bad intentions since she'd seen us with Kimmy. If I'd been proactive I'd have been watching so Steph didn't do it – of course, I'd be more mature then and I would have told Dad about the sweater right away. Association with Kimmy was rough at times. Thankfully, she'd never really shoplift. However, this boy himself was bad news.

Becky:

When giving D.J. advice, I'd told her flat out a few times never to base things on what Kimmy did. I could only imagine how strange she had seemed to Pam.

I didn't tease like the others – even then they cared about her. But, I knew she needed lots of help from wholesome people like us. However, there wee times when I could see why Danny thought she was annoying. I was right behind D.J. the time with the food fight, making sure that Kimmy never considered seeing that boy again.

Part of her problem was her parents – they ignored her quite a bit, they had a Velcro wall for timeout and I wonder if Kimmy used the strategy of making the worst kids smell her feet as a teen – the smell was legendary then – stemmed from her mom's own weird habits. Foot-smelling wasn't a good long-term solution.

Thankfully, Kimmy was never out of control as a teen; she'd just never learned to make smart choices. D.J. had to give her lots of advice, which led to Kimmy feeling she was kind of bossy sometimes. I figured if Kimmy ever became a parent, she was going to have to copy D.J. extensively, just as she did with homework.

The only consolation was, the way things were going with Michelle, Kimmy would have lots of ideas to copy later.

2- 7 Joey Gets Tough Dec. 2-3, 1988

Jesse – Fri., Dec. 9 - D.J. Says Michelle Will Need Help:

Anyone could call a family meeting. D.J. did this evening to discuss Michelle. "Someone has to start taking charge," D.J. insisted. "I talked to my teacher, Mr. Zambruski, this week; he says one of you has to do something."

I told D.J. I'd talked with Michelle, but Joey said D.J. was right. "It's really a big step for your father; he never had a little one to raise by himself. Pam did everything. As for Jesse, I don't know. Maybe it's his dad." Joey admitted that he was bothered by how his dad had acted, too, so he just wanted to play. "I like being a kid. I play hockey in the house sometimes." Danny glared at him, and he started sounding like an adult. "I'm glad you accept that I have the right to enforce limits with you, Deej."

"So, what about Michelle? She pulled the plant down today, and I'm worried about what will happen when we get the Christmas tree in here." He wasn't sure. "Come on, Joey, I'm sure the Flintstones did it to Pebbles," D.J. pointed out.

"What, make that adorable little face scrunch all up and get all teary?" Joey asked, clearly not wanting to do it.

I was proud of D.J. for talking his language. "D.J.'s right, man. All you had to do

was say ‘no’ a little more forcefully than normal and put her in a chair like Fred and Wilma.” I rolled my eyes, not believing I just got drawn into talking about cartoons.

“Well, why didn’t you do that, you saw me trying to clean it up,” Joey said.

“Hey, I told her not to, she was cool about it. You gotta know how to say stuff.”

“Uncle Jesse, that was the third time this week she did it,” Stephanie said. D.J. patted her on the head. I thought she’d scripted it with Stephanie.

“Look, I don’t think her behavior is as big of a problem as everyone’s making it out to be,” Danny said defensively. “Why can’t we just distract her, like before, with the painting? I mean, she stopped coloring on her dresser…eventually.”

“When I took the paints away from her after she did it again,” Joey said lowly.

D.J. said, “So, this is something that might not get done unless I do it?” I hesitated because of not wanting to be my dad, Joey shrugged, and Danny tried to talk her out of it. “Dad, what would Mom do?” D.J. asked pointedly.

Danny didn’t talk; he just went off to clean something.

2- 8 Triple Date Dec. 10, 1988

Stephanie – On Bathroom fixtures and the house’s age:

After the problems with the ring in the sink, Dad decided to get a new one. The home was built in the 1920s, and even featured an old-style tub - probably the kind President Taft got stuck in at the White House - away from the wall with little feet on the bottom. It also had a hot water tank neatly hidden in the laundry area, so none of us could touch it and get hurt. We had old plumbing, so Dad used his Christmas bonus to get new plumbing and have the sink moved.[180] We kept the old tub, however, because it was well kept up, thanks to Dad, plus Dad’s sentimental about lots of things. Uncle Jesse and Joey contributed a little from some ads they’d sold. That was done a few days before Christmas, just before we tried to leave for the family reunion.

D.J. - Tues., Dec. 13, 1988 - Taking charge of Michelle:

Over the last few days, I’d stood in the downstairs bathroom twice with Michelle and made her roll toilet paper back up with me. I’d told her forcefully that paper was not food when she tried to put it in her mouth. I’d corrected a few other things, too. She still listened somewhat well to me, but it was getting tougher.

With five other people, including three adults, in a house you can keep a toddler out of trouble, but only for so long. Since her party a month ago, I’d seen an increase in stuff that she needed to know was wrong. And, Dad wasn’t telling her what wrong meant. Uncle Jesse sounded sterner than Dad, and Joey took crayons away if she colored on something she shouldn’t. But, that wasn’t solving the whole problem.

Steph and I walked into the living room to see crayon marks on the wall. Dad was just cleaning it off with a special compound he’d read about, while trying to keep Michelle from coloring on them more.

“Now do we have a problem?” Stephanie asked, seeming to know the answer.

“Now, we have a problem.” I scooped Michelle up as she marked a wall, made her look right into my angry eyes, and shouted, “No, Michelle. Bad girl!” Her lip trembled, and she cried as I carried her upstairs and into her room. “You need a timeout

[180] It moves from “Triple Date” to “A Fish Called Martin;” the need for new plumbing in such a house is likely, as fixtures looked older in the earlier one. From then, one can presume they stayed in place.

for coloring on walls!" I scolded as I walked up there. I angrily sat her on a little chair and scooted it so it was right against the wall. After she tried to leave and I held her down for a second, she simply sat and wept. I wasn't feeling too good myself.

Dad appeared in the doorway. "Deej…"

I gave him a chance. "Would you rather do this?"

"No, it's just…well, I mean…she's just a little kid."

I nodded. "A little kid who needs punished."

"Deej, look how she's crying. Do you really want to make that darling girl sad?"

"If nobody else will do it and Mom's not here, someone has to do it." Danny sighed. "I'd have to if I were alone babysitting. You wouldn't mind if I sent Steph to her room if she did something wrong, right? I'd be in charge."

Dad sighed. He nodded slowly, and said, "One minute per age."

"If that short a time works." Which it would for now.

Dad didn't know whether to thank me or cry. He just seemed, well, it was hard to describe. Way more lost, I guess, than if I'd been proactive and he'd asked me to help.

Danny:

I spent a few minutes in my room weeping, missing Pam terribly. D.J. had her helping to scrub the walls when I came down. I did the rest, but she'd gotten her message across, as much as a two-year old needed with limited understanding. Michelle knew now she'd been naughty. And, she knew there were consequences to that, more than just having stuff taken away from her.

D.J. and she bonded very well after any correcting she did. It might have taken a bit more cuddling and fun stuff those first few times she disciplined Michelle, since D.J. wasn't dedicated to being like a mom, but Michelle still quickly accepted that she was still loved even though D.J. enforced a consequence. Michelle learned the sudden change in D.J.'s demeanor was only because she was naughty, just as with previous correcting – like the "no running in the parking lot" example – she'd learned with us.

Only much later did I realize I'd let D.J. fill Pam's shoes. Disciplining her would be D.J.'s job for now. It was as if Pam would still be there. I could have done far worse, though. I did great otherwise. My sadness just kept me from taking the lead, as I tried to fill a void in my life, though I thought of it as wanting Michelle to remain a baby longer.

D.J. – Why Michelle didn't color on walls anymore:

Michelle almost never colored on walls again. It was only a couple times, once with lipstick, once with finger paints. She learned Daddy would be mad, like with other little stuff. Michelle just understood I was the one who disciplined.

We taught her well. Dad's only requirement was that I not call it punishment. I didn't like that, but it was okay as long as he supported me, which he did. He never brought her to me and said she needed punished, but if Michelle complained, he'd back me up, saying, "D.J.'s only doing that because," and then give the reason. It got to where I could remind Michelle of the rules and she'd listen.

I never would have believed how long I'd be doing it, though.

Joey – Dealing with Michelle snowballs into relational problems for D.J.:

Even before this, D.J. was apprehensive about doing a lot with Steph. Now, she

feared Danny would force her to do more. Disciplining Michelle was stressful enough without having to be Pam's replacement in everything. Thankfully she never blamed Michelle, and didn't blame bad grades or unfinished projects at school on it, like one she learned of before Christmas that was due at the end of the grading period.

Jesse and I fell into a pattern quickly. If Michelle did something wrong and it didn't need punished, or if D.J. wasn't there, we told Danny. If it did, we told D.J.. If D.J. wasn't home, Jesse tried to talk to her. He and Michelle had a special bond. Often, he'd sit and have a talk with her, and she'd listen as he cuddled her in his lap.

We wanted to keep track of her so she wouldn't do anything wrong, but you can't watch a kid 24 hours a day. If his talks didn't work, once D.J. arrived home, I'd tell her, and Michelle quickly learned that she'd get in trouble for her misdeed.

I melted too easily, or I might have been able to discipline. I could have with a few things, anyway. My problem was, I would have been too inconsistent and easily manipulated, compared to D.J.. And, Jesse's talks worked well, but needed someone to show that he meant it. And, while he talked tough, that only went so far.

Becky – Michelle Not into Lots of Stuff Like Twins at One:

It wasn't as rough as when Nicky and Alex were one. Michelle didn't get into lots of stuff. She'd play well when told to stay in one place, as long as she had something to do, once the initial setting and enforcing of limits was done and they were established in her mind. They did succeed with one trick we'd heard about from an expert on our show, so she wouldn't run into the road.

They got her thinking about how soft she was, like a banana. They got a brick, which she agreed was hard like a car. They dropped the brick on the banana. Boy, was it squished! She always held our hands and never went into the street without us.

Another great thing was that Michelle always froze right away. Having that command really helped – for all the times she was really wild, I don't recall that she ever disobeyed a command to freeze. That was ingrained from a very early age.

Stephanie: On freezing, and attention:

Dad loved to lavish attention on all of us. So, D.J. got a room slightly bigger than the master bedroom, and I got special treats, too. I got one when little Michelle never got; toys on someone else's birthday. Dad overdid it a bit with all of us. We shouldn't dwell on the negative. There were many positives to everything in our family.

Teaching Michelle to freeze was really rewarding. I'd have helped with that, regardless. Other discipline was different, though. I didn't like thinking of putting her in timeout, though it needed done. It reminded me too much of going to my room. I hated getting punished, and tried hard to be really good so I wouldn't be.[181]

But, freezing was just hugging her and lavishing praise on her if she obeyed or scolding and putting her in her playpen if she didn't. That part seemed pretty easy. Even Dad would do that, because putting her in her playpen wasn't really punishment.

2- 9 Our Very First Christmas Show Dec. 24-25, 1988

Jesse – Why Jesse never punished Michelle:

[181] All show why Steph isn't likely as D.J.to have disciplined Michelle, though she could do some; one might also add D.J. would remember and copy how Pam was with Stephanie more readily.

I never punished Michelle, because the way my dad yelled I couldn't stand to punish anyone.[182] He would scream so much, and I never wanted to be like that. I could hardly stand to start punishing my own kids, I was so afraid of turning into him.

Still, after a timeout or some time when she lost dessert, if she was about to do the same thing, I mentioned what D.J. had done to discipline her, and she'd usually listen. She obeyed me pretty well, because we had that bond, but also because D.J. was boss. I supported her just like Danny did, saying she was right to put her in timeout. That would be crucial for all of us, as we'd learn later.

If Michelle didn't listen, like when I thought she'd hidden my keys,[183] I turned to D.J.. That time, of course, D.J. didn't threaten timeout. She wasn't that sure Michelle had done it, given the lack of a guilty look, and she hadn't. By then, D.J. had learned when to punish and when to just talk, though it was rough on her to react so much.

Joey – Why Joey never punished Michelle, either:

I wasn't as worried as Jesse about becoming my dad. Okay, I might have been a touch, given how strict he could be,[184] but I knew setting limits wasn't the same as making someone stand at attention and sounding mean. Still, I was more interested in being accepted, so I could have that childhood I felt I'd missed.

If I'd put my foot down more and not played so much, like saying we could play hockey in the house, Michelle never would have expected me to play a game to find a ring she hid.[185] None of us adults could give the consistent discipline Michelle needed. I was good at distracting her. But, I wasn't ready to enforce limits myself.

Michelle would never have learned to behave at all without someone doing what Danny should have. However, he was barely willing to let D.J. do it, and that only because the doctor warned him it needed done. We wouldn't do it, and she eventually learned she didn't have to obey us much. Thankfully, her sisters were there.

D.J – Dec. 29 – How Stephanie Helped Discipline Michelle:

All that doesn't mean Stephanie couldn't have punished. While Dad and the others couldn't or wouldn't discipline, Steph might have; she could copy Mom some.

She did help Michelle talk more respectfully. Michelle never called adults "dude" past age four and a half, and never said "duh" to them past five and a half or so. Still, I helped, too, and that took a few years.[186]

Steph's biggest problems doing more would have been her age and size. She wouldn't have been as much of an authority. I looked more like an adult to a small child. I preferred to talk on my level, but I could still relate to Michelle when I had to, I just wasn't doing it a lot; I was reacting, not being proactive. My mind was far more complex

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[182] Since he couldn't put his own kids in timeout in "Tough Love" till pushed, it would be impossible for him to have punished Michelle, as he'd be used to it by "Tough Love."

[183] "Lust In the Dust"

[184] "Viva Las Joey" – Joey's reaction standing so straight upon hearing his dad is not normal for a parent-child relationship, but he lightens up fast enough it probably wasn't a huge problem.

[185] "Ol' Brown Eyes" – his saying they could play hockey in the house ("A Pinch for a Pinch") is another indication he could never have punished Michelle. The only possible candidate for disciplining Michelle besides D.J. is Stephanie, and most feel she wouldn't know how to nearly as effectively.

[186] Since Stephanie does scold Michelle the times mentioned below, Stephanie certainly helped, but for reasons given, she would neither be the only one to correct her, nor the main one.

than Steph's, another reason reacting to Michelle's antics was easier for me.

Take the Christmas tree. She yelled at Michelle for almost pulling it down today. Toddlers do that if not watched carefully. I quickly scooped Michelle up and put her in the corner, with a loud "no."

Steph could have punished like that. She could relate a rule and consequence, like when she played with dolls. But, that wasn't needed. Steph only talked, scolded or tricked Michelle, and backed me up if I punished.[187] There was a good reason for that. She may have overused timeout if only she did it. I was learning – slowly, since I only reacted – when to punish, when to simply scold, and so on.

I guess I could have advised her on what to do each time. But, Stephanie still wouldn't have had the air of authority I did. Michelle learned to listen to both of us, but I taught Michelle the meaning of right and wrong. It wasn't just something someone said. It meant there were good consequences to doing right, and bad to doing wrong. And, soon, she would listen some – like when Steph would put her to bed a few times.

2-11 A Little Romance Jan. 2-4, 1989

Becky – Away from home, her birthday, that date she bid on and won:

I'd decided on a whim to bid on Jesse. It was my birthday and I was far away from home for the first time.[188] Our date turned into a wonderful candlelight dinner and good night kiss.[189] Little things like that, and Connie - whose husband's parents lived in the area[190] - and Howie coming out, really helped, as I was so far from home. It's normal for a woman in a strange place to splurge to make herself feel better, the way some love to shop. At least, it was for me. I was a speedy shopper, but shopping till I dropped was never for me; I was usually sensible about it.[191]

I was warming up to Jesse. He was cute, though he didn't like thinking of himself as cute. He and Joey had two big advertising projects they wanted to try; they really wanted to land a job in that field. So, we made the date for the 10th instead. They sweated over the Sweat World one, but had the other idea all ready. That's why they were up all night the night of the 11th doing it.

2-10 Middle Age Crazy Jan. 11, 1989
2-12 Fogged In Jan. 12-3, 1989

Stephanie – Jan 16:

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[187] As in "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" (boy who cried wolf story) and "Silence Is Not Golden" (scolding her for calling Danny "mean"). Even if girls tend to listen to older sisters, there must be a foundation of what it means to do right and wrong for the conscience to form. A few say Steph taught this, but as shown, D.J. is far more plausible, and almost all think it was D.J. doing it. In families where this is a problem, the oldest is almost always the one to notice a need.

[188] "A Little Romance." Her birthday wouldn't be mentioned; she didn't know the others well. The book "The Wish I Wish I Never Wished" says Steph's birthday is right after hers in the family. Michelle plans Steph's surprise party in around 2 weeks. So, Becky's is right after the first of the year, easily doable in other episodes without being mentioned. No episodes conflict with this date, and there wouldn't be big preparation; plus she'd mostly just celebrate with Jesse.

[189] "Matchmaker Michelle"

[190] This is clearly the grandparents Howie is told to wave to – Connie's (and therefore Becky's) would be in Nebraska and not watching; plus he said "hi" to the whole Bay Area.

[191] "Michelle Rides Again 2," she helped a friend elope really fast once, but isn't regular at it.

At D.J.'s request, once Dr. Landress was done with my checkup, I blurted that, in case he was interested, D.J. was the only one punishing Michelle.

Few people realize how important it is that someone teach a child right from wrong at a young age like Dad and the others were neglecting. D.J. just started doing it because she sensed it needed done, but didn't realize why. Most preteens would feel something needed done if a smaller child was doing whatever they wanted.

He asked Dad, Uncle Jesse, and Joey all to come to D.J.'s checkup, so they could discuss how things were going. Dad said they'd arrange it.

"D.J. said we had a problem last month. Do we still have a problem?" I asked.

The doctor told me everything was all right; he didn't want me worrying. "I just want to talk to your dad and the others, to help them get things organized better when it comes to teaching Michelle right from wrong." I believed him.

Uncle Jesse and Joey were really developing a close friendship. They didn't put too much pressure on D.J., though Uncle Jesee left Michelle and me with D.J. at Kimmy's when D.J. was on a sleepover there. Even that wasn't for very long, though. It wasn't like he made D.J. watch the whole night at Kimmy's.[192]

Their friendship surprised Uncle Jesse at first. They'd become like brothers, though; as he said, "we're in this whole family thing together." That's why they let D.J. help a little, like on the sleepover. He knew she had her own life, so they didn't call her home that night, or leave us at Kimmy's if D.J. was there any other time. I didn't like the idea, but I saw it as a challenge; I figured I'd try to find her diary. The page I read talked about how she tried to mix ketchup, mustard, beef gravy, beans, and a few other things in the cafeteria a few weeks earlier. It was as yucky as it sounds.

Danny – Feb. 2, 1989 – Jesse and Joey working together:

I was so proud of Jesse and Joey. They weren't just partners, they were becoming best friends. I knew they'd be sought after quite a bit. That meant I might have to find someone to watch the girls every day.

I wouldn't be caught unprepared. I found contacts I'd made checking into nannies last year. I didn't tell the girls my thinking - it would have been a bit confusing and scary, especially for Stephanie, not knowing what would happen. Of course, they worried, anyway, but things like that build faith. They teach it'll work out okay, like when we finally got to Disneyland. And, as it turned out, we didn't need a nanny.

2-13 Working Mothers Feb. 3-4, 1989

Jesse – Feb. 4 - Dodging a Big One:

I dodged a big one this time. I'd been living a lie about graduating for so long, I didn't think till later how close I came to the ultimate humiliation. No, I don't mean telling the truth; I mean calling myself Joey's employee. I still wasn't very humble, especially when it came to working with him, considering how goofy he acted at times.

A few minutes after our new boss, Mr. Malatesta, told us we could work from home, he came back in and started talking with our family. And, Danny happened to

[192] Even if D.J. needed to be 12 to baby-sit, she is in "Pal Joey" and "Misadventures in Babysitting," before "13 Candles." Jesse was only watching Steph and Michelle. Danny and Joey knew these 2 were the girls he dropped off at the Gibblers. As to Steph never meeting Kimmy's parents ("Fuller House"), Garth can watch as they wouldn't have a sitter. Or, D.J. could, the others know she's there, and the Gibblers ignore them.

mention what a great job it would be for Joey, and that college degree he had.

Suddenly, I got really nervous. I insisted I'd worked my way up from nothing to have a very successful band. I remarked that a college education was good, but the little guy needed to be remembered, too.

Our boss interrupted me then, and told me it didn't matter. We did good work. We'd sent a bit of work history with our samples, and Joey had mentioned his college degree, though I left that part blank. It didn't matter as long as one of us had a college degree in something that would make us good employees over the long haul.

However, if we'd taken the office and everything, our boss would have pushed harder to learn about my education and might have discovered my secret. This would have meant calling Joey, being more educated, the executive and me his subordinate.

Danny:

I blurted that Jesse might be anxious because he never went to college. I never guessed he'd dropped out of high school. College degrees were crucial in business; their boss would expect one of them to have one. He figured that's why Jesse was blabbering.

I'd hoped they could find regular work, and they did. Plus, they could still work at home. Not everyone can do this, but thankfully, more companies were willing to allow it. In fact, Mr. Malatesta was secretly thankful he didn't have to give them the office, too, since he knew nothing of Jesse's educational background. I sometimes wondered later, though, if one of those prospective nannies might have been the right woman for me.

Becky – Feb. 9 – Telescope for D.J.'s birthday:

D.J.'s birthday went a lot better this year. Danny felt she needed a hobby; she'd gone as far as she could in some, or was just losing a little interest. He bought her a telescope.[193] He said it was provided she didn't look at boys, of course. Seriously, he thought stargazing would be a fun family activity. We'd interviewed a local astronomer, and this person gave Dad a great deal on a slightly used one.

She didn't really want one, though it was fun for a while. It's just that Danny had ideas about getting the whole family interested in some activity - like stargazing - that was really supposed to draw us closer. He tried too hard, that's what he did. We used it a few times, but not often. When Nicky and Alex were old enough to appreciate it, though, they got quite a thrill out of it.

2-14 Little Shop of Sweaters Feb. 12, 1989

Dr. Landress – Thu., Feb. 15 – Confirming Need to Punish Michelle: [194]

"I hear you've been busy with Michelle," I told D.J. with a smile at her checkup. Stephanie had blurted that D.J. was punishing Michelle; it was just like when she learned to tell time and told me I was late shortly afterward; she hadn't realized the doctor in the office also had hospital patients and emergencies.

The men were all here, at my request. Jesse's mom watched the others.

I gave them all background as to why it was necessary to discipline, the same things I'd told Mr. Tanner. "I know you're busy, so I'll get right to the point. Right now, D.J. doing a little is fine; it sounds like Michelle isn't testing much."

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[193] Seen in "Crimes and Michelle's Misdemeanor"

[194] Start of how doctor would confront things realistically, and how men – and D.J. – would react

"Oh, D.J.'s super with her," Danny said. "She complained if D.J. did that at first, but now Michelle accepts it. I know that loving bond will always be there."

"That was one thing I wanted to assure you. I see the concern about that loving bond more with new parents," I said. "It sounds, D.J., like you excel at that."

Jesse agreed. "Yeah, it's so sweet how they cuddle and talk after she disciplines her. Man, I see so much of Pam in you then, Deej." D.J. smiled sadly.

"That's good. My point in saying that, Mr. Tanner, is that that loving bond will remain. But, this is your job. I wanted to explain, and see what's on your minds. Mr. Tanner, as the father you know how to handle her. Is there a reason you haven't started to enforce timeouts, to isolate like we discussed, yet?"

Danny said he thought of her as a baby; despite what I'd said. I sensed grief over the loss of Pam, but I didn't push it.

I understood Jesse's worries as he discussed his dad – he needed encouragement. His strong, yet motherly talks were beneficial, I told him, and he needn't punish, as long as someone else was doing so. It was Mr. Tanner's job, anyway.

I was concerned when Mr. Tanner began dusting my stethoscope nervously, and Joey said "All hands on deck" into it like Popeye, but I kept things focused.

Joey struck me as the most reasonable, once I got him to stop playing Popeye and I explained Michelle's psyche. "Stephanie told me how you helped her lose her fear of the dentist, Joey. It seems like you could matter-of-factly put a child in timeout without the attention that can rile them up, and it won't be a problem. But, you understand, Mr. Tanner, that you are the father and should be the one to discipline?"

He wasn't sure. However, Jesse and Joey weren't offering to do it; instead, they seemed to be deferring to him.

Joey was too happy being a friend. "This is what I've always wanted; a big, happy family like the Brady Bunch. I don't want to be the bad guy." When pressed, he admitted he was afraid of scaring someone, like his overbearing, military father had.

I finished by stating firmly, "Someone has to, and it's good to see that D.J. has for now. Michelle must learn consistent boundaries. But, D.J. won't know everything about how to handle things like you, Mr. Tanner. She at least needs a good advisor to help for a few weeks, or a couple months, till you're ready." I was hoping to get him to accept that he might need counseling, but all he did was mention how D.J. had gone to Becky for a number of womens' issues.

I'd hoped, in discussing this with all three, to find a solution, but it seemed that D.J. would be the one for now. I simply advised them on how, the importance of routines, and so on, and let them go, urging Mr. Tanner to start to discipline soon.

Becky:

D.J. told me about all this, and I just promised to be there anytime. She still had a lot she hadn't learned, but she had a lot that she had from Pam, too. Still, she just reacted when there were problems rather than being proactive and working to avoid them. Being proactive would have been a lot more work at first, but saved lots of headaches later.

D.J. – Mon., Feb. 19 - Retainer, New Food:

Today's dentist appointment was a bummer. I'd have to wear a retainer for a little

over a year, to straighten one tooth.[195] True, I didn't need braces, but it was frustrating.

We ate out tonight, and as the others consoled me, Dad convinced me to try a new food; chicken parmesan. I was kind of a picky eater when I was little, so I hadn't tried a lot of things. However, I really liked it, and it became my favorite.[196]

It was so cute to see Michelle with a crush; it didn't last, though. With Howie not here, she stopped watching the video after a few days, and forgot about him entirely after a month or so; kids' memories are very fuzzy at this age.

2-16 Baby Love Fri., Feb. 24, 1989

Jesse – Mar. 3 – Danny Nervous About D.J. Maturing:

"Becky," Danny said nervously over the phone this evening, "can you come over right away? It's an emergency!"

"Why, what's wrong?" Becky asked, a little alarmed.

He could tell he'd startled her. "Oh, it's not…well, what I mean is…D.J. wants someone to take her shopping tomorrow. For, well, things. Female things."

This summer, when D.J. hit puberty, Becky would be ready, as with Steph later.

I was falling more in love with Becky every minute. I felt for sure she was the one I'd marry. I might have sooner, if I hadn't still had a bit of my selfish streak. But, those wild ways took lots of work to get out of my system.

For now, though, Becky said, "Danny, calm down. Can't you take her?"

"I tried, Becky; I kept embarrassing her. I asked dumb questions."

"How dumb?"

"You know when we told her the 'ugly duckling' story? That dumb."[197]

Becky came over to find me trying to console D.J., though admitting that I was too young to know what Pam went through. Danny was cleaning, and Joey was trying to figure out what cartoon character to impersonate. The younger girls were in bed. Danny was either really missing Pam, or he was even more nervous than usual about this. He got up at 5 AM tomorrow, Saturday no less, and painted the banister.[198]

2-17 El Problema Grande de D.J. Mar. 21-2, 1989

Joey – How the school did languages:

They weren't quite ready to move 6th graders to Middle School, but they were close. California was becoming very bilingual, so they wanted sixth graders to have the option of taking a foreign language; this let D.J. and Kimmy get back together for one class, anyway. Their teachers – D.J.'s was Mr. Zambruski - scheduled things so the same subject was always right after the foreign language, in preparation for the following year when the schedules would be set in stone for Junior High students.

D.J. got her grades on the 21st, after the grading period ended. She'd begun to accept she had to try a lot harder in Spanish. It was more difficult, at this point, than disciplining Michelle, who was fairly easy going and obeyed D.J. well.

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[195] Her "old retainer" had been left at Kimmy's by the time of "Good News, Bad News." This is the normal way it's done if only one or two teeth need straightened.

[196] Favorite in "Shape Up" after burgers were her favorite in season 1.

[197] "A Little Romance," also Becky promises to be there for such girl questions elsewhere

[198] "A House Divided," His supposedly having an interview on Saturday is a hint this episode was a dream. Read on for more of why, and what really happened.

As Michelle hung out with Jesse more, though, you could see Jesse was the one she really loved to copy, which would lead to problems later.

Anyway, students could take six years of a language. I asked what she'd take in 12th, [199] if they'd taken their six years of Spanish by the end of 11th. D.J. thought French.

Kimmy interrupted. "What about Pig Latin?"

"W-we-w-we-why would you want to l-le-l-le-learn to communic-uh-communic-uh talk like me?" I asked in my Porky Pig voice.

Stephanie talked so much she'd have had to stay in from one recess period if she kept it up; that's why the teacher wrote a note to Danny in her report card. However, that was the last time she talked out in class; she learned her lesson.

2-18 Goodbye, Mr. Bear Mar. 25-31, 1989

Stephanie - Easter Sunday, March 26, 1989 – Praying for Mr. Bear's Return:

I had faith that Mr. Bear would be found, but I was slowly accepting he might not be. Dad and the others said Mr. Bear was experienced, and could help some kid who didn't have the great family I did. That made sense, but I still knew he might be found, and he was. God was so good when I prayed to Him for Mr. Bear to be found.[200]

I remembered about God from when Mom was alive, and the times since when I'd been to church. I knew He was busy, and He didn't have to say "yes," but I knew I'd be heard. I paid lots more attention than usual to today's Easter service and pageant. We didn't go often except for Christmas and Easter, but we went a few times, in a van if none of the adults came. One of the moms in the playgroup drove.[201]

Now that I'm older, I tell kids losing Mr. Bear for a short time was just one of those little things God lets happen to build a kid's faith.

Jesse – Conscience, Almost Telling Truth:

Easter was one of those times when we were all reminded we'd see Pam again someday; we mourned, but not like people without hope. I stayed behind in the sanctuary for a moment while the others got Michelle.

Looking up, with nobody around, I imagined myself staring through the roof, straight to Heaven. Pam was right, I admitted. About my job prospects, about everything. She may not have said it in so many words, but still…

I closed my eyes, struggling within myself, not wanting to reveal it, and yet, feeling I had to. "Thanks for gettin' me that job anyway, God. Guess I should tell them the truth about dropping out, huh?" I prayed.

And yet, when they came back, I looked into their faces and froze. "I…" I shook my head; I couldn't betray that trust by telling how I'd lied. Maybe if I said how much I appreciated them, anyway. I tried once more. "You've been here for me so much, and I…I just…." I wasn't sure how to say it.

"Thinking about Pam, huh?" Danny guessed, putting a hand on my shoulder. "It's

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[199] "The Producer," most only offer 4-6 years of a foreign language. They take Spanish 6-11th.

[200] "Goodbye, Mr. Bear" - Stephanie asks God to find him and knows He's really busy, showing Protestant faith (not praying to a saint) and maturity in knowing it's not top priority for Him.

[201] As noted, they've been in church, mostly with Pam. Going in member or church van most plausible, though it may be walking distance ("Just One of the Guys" bake sale). Like better behaved bus kids your narrator knows, they struggle to get there due to family issues but try to keep faith, etc.

okay. We know it's hard for you to say what you feel sometimes. We feel the same way."

"Thanks, man," I said with relief at the easy out. I think God knew I was listening on the inside, so He let it go, and kept working quietly, in my conscience.

Sadly, I went too far the other way. I let the lie prey on me, but I refused to do the right thing and tell the truth. For instance, once, I felt like a dummy around Becky's smart friends, but only spoke with Joey and Becky about never going to college.[202] In reality, it was my dropping out of high school that was weighing on me, but I wouldn't come to grips with that. By next year I was again talking about my graduation that never was, without struggling at all, as I sank back into that one big lie.

See what I mean by having to be dragged kicking and screaming spiritually at times? It took so much effort just to get me to admit one thing. It's a good thing God's so merciful. He knew I had other priorities to handle, too, just like Pam had realized.

Danny – Mar. 31 – Steph's clingier times & father-daughter days with each:

We spent the last of today watching home movies. We couldn't get enough, even really old ones with Pam and Jesse. We ate in the living room and relived birthdays and other stuff. Michelle got a mega dose of hearing about her mom.

Stephanie still wanted me around a lot at times, because of her mom's death. She'd had nightmares at times, and would come to me most often. Except for the earthquake she was always able to tell us her problems. One of those clingier times came soon after this. When she was clingier, we scheduled special father-daughter days where I'd take her out for lunch or dinner, and then we'd hang out in the park, or play games. It helped her feel a lot more comfortable. I might not have been Pam, but I had a nurturing part to me, and that was crucial after a loss like that. If D.J. had been proactive I'd have still been doing this, just because I had a great bond with all my girls.

The times she needed me around so much got less and less. However, I still took time with each of the girls. Steph became a big baseball fan because of it; especially of the Cardinals and star shortstop Ozzie Smith. D.J. enjoyed shopping and museums, too. She soaked up knowledge like crazy; she didn't have to focus on boys, and we could share a common interest. Since Michelle wasn't along she didn't feel pressure to watch her, either. Michelle spent father-daughter days playing, or at the petting zoo or the stables. She loved animals, which helped us to encourage her to help others later.

2-19 Blast from the Past	Apr. 7-8, 1989
2-20 I'm There for You, Babe	Apr. 15-6, 1989

Stephanie: Explaining to Michelle How Jesse Hit Joey:

We never hit as punishment, we couldn't conceive of it at this point. I knew the concept from other kids talking, but like D.J. at my age, I figured it was just for really bad kids; my mind was mostly black and white yet.

Anyway, Uncle Jesse playfully hit Joey at times. He didn't do it much in front of Michelle, but I saw it a couple times. He explained it was like the Three Stooges. I had a chance to peek at one of their movies; he was watching a whole set for his birthday. "Now, I see where Uncle Jesse gets the idea," I told Dad.

They used the Stooges to help Michelle understand. When she was pinching once, Uncle Jesse re-emphasized that he and Joey were a team and could do that, and that it

[202] "No More Mr. Dumb Guy" – he never even mentions high school.

didn't really hurt when he did it to Joey; it was just pretend.[203]

Becky – Jesse coaching & Kimmy's soccer play:

D.J. loved our talks now that we were riding together again. I was glad to; I knew Jesse and Joey weren't ready to talk about puberty or anything related to it, especially with a girl. Danny's way of handling that was to give her a book about it.

Jesse impressed me, though. He coached D.J.'s soccer team, and the kids had fun when they weren't falling down laughing at Kimmy. Once, Kimmy suggested the girls hold compacts to make the sun shine off them into the other team's eyes. The problem was, when they tried it in a scrimmage, they paid so much attention to getting the mirrors in their compacts aimed just right, the other team scored. Also, she actually picked a ball up and started running with it. She asked, "Are you sure kicking's not just a tradition?"

He was great with the girls; I knew he'd make a wonderful father one day.

2-21 Luck Be a Lady (1) and
2-22 Luck Be a Lady (2) June 2-3, 1989

Joey – July 9 - The Typical Two-Year-Old Emergency Room Trip:

Danny's attempts to keep everything totally organized didn't even help keep Michelle from a trip to the ER today.

It was nothing serious, just the usual. Danny was home from work, and he'd arranged a great meal out on our picnic table. We ate out there a fair amount in the summer, not just on the Fourth. Jesse usually used the grill, after Danny once spent so much time cleaning it we'd order pizza by the time he was done.

"Danny, nobody has lima beans at a picnic," Jesse complained.

Danny finished dishing Michelle's food as he said, "I'll have you know, Jess, that succotash is among the most popular foods in…" He tried to think. "Well, some parts of the country. And, succotash is corn and lima beans."

"What does that have to do with picnics?" Jesse interrupted hastily.

Danny stood while Michelle fingered her burger and lima beans. "Let me finish, Jess. The Indians helped the Pilgrims survive that first year by teaching them to grow corn. Since then, it's become a staple of American culture, and corn on the cob is often served at picnics. Take the corn off the cob, and of course we don't have any right here, but mix it with lima beans, and what do you have?"

"The weirdest logic I've ever heard," Kimmy piped up.

Jesse looked shocked. "Oh, man, I agree with Gibbler. What's happening to me?"

"Yucky," Michelle said, flipping a lima bean off her plate.

"No, Michelle, not yuckytash, succotash," Danny said, picking the bean up and wiping it off with a napkin.

Stephanie put one on a spoon for her. "Here, Michelle. Want me to feed you?" she asked excitedly. "Open wide!" She shoved it into Michelle's mouth. "Isn't that yummy?" Michelle shook her head, and spit it out.

"Well, at least we know she likes olives," D.J. remarked. "She likes some greens.'

"If you want green, we've got some moldy bread at home," Kimmy informed us.

Danny put another on a spoon and tried to feed it to Michelle, but she shook her head. "Come on, Michelle, honey, I'm trying to introduce you to as many vegetables as I

[203] "A Pinch For A Pinch," he loves the Stooges, girls would see them, he says "no hitting or pinching"

can. It's my duty as a father to ensure you have a well balanced meal." Michelle picked up a bean and looked at it, examining it very carefully. "That's right, look at it. Study it. Become more comfortable with it."

"Come on, Michelle, eat it!" Stephanie and D.J. encouraged her.

"See, the trick is to expose them to new foods, and…Michelle!" Danny cried. He'd glanced back down, only to see that like many children of two, she loved to experiment. She found putting things into other things to be very interesting. So much so that she stuffed that lima bean up her nose. [204]

"Michelle, you were supposed to eat that! It was supposed to go in your mouth; even Kimmy wouldn't put it in her nose – at least I don't think she would," Stephanie rambled excitedly as Michelle cried. It obviously hurt to have a bean up her nose.

Danny sighed. "Come on, we need to get her to the emergency room," Danny said, quickly picking her up and cuddling her. Jesse and he went, and I watched the others. Thankfully, it was removed easily, with no damage.

For a couple years, Michelle's attitude was "Why not try it?" with a variety of things. Like with Comet's food; Steph was curious about how it tasted. She wouldn't to try it, but when Michelle kept demanding it, Steph gave her some.[205] That stopped Michelle from doing that for a long while, though she did try his treats once; kids don't always recall such lessons perfectly.

Becky:

Little things like that could still unnerve Stephanie. She was frustrated that she couldn't stop Michelle; she got agitated at times. But, sometimes kids move way too fast. You can't always anticipate what they'll do.

In addition to learning to say "how rude," Steph controlled herself very well and would walk away from problems even when little – even if in her bare feet[206] at various times. Of course, with her childhood exuberance she didn't always think about bee stings – which thankfully never came. Sometimes it's fun to walk in your bare feet.

Stephanie – Mon., July 17 – Sports Heroes and the Wizard of Oz:

"Now, Steph, you're going to have quite a long wait if you want to catch the players arriving. Are you sure you want to go that early tomorrow?"

"Dad, this is Ozzie Smith we're talking about."

"I'll take her, Danny; you can bring D.J. and Michelle later," Joey said.

Dad laughed. "It's no problem, Joey; you bring them. Besides, your heroes are all retired." Joey had loved the Tigers in the middle 1960s before moving to San Francisco. "Your dad may not have given you much, but those couple years in Detroit left you with some real heroes." Joey loved comedy more than anything, of course, but he did like baseball. In fact, one reason he rarely had lots of money was because he'd spend it on replica uniforms, as well as on kid stuff. He even bought a Hank Greenberg one; that fellow was a Hall of Famer, like Ozzie would be.

"But, Danny, they call the man the 'Wizard of Oz.' I want to show him my 'Wizard of Oz' stuff and see what he thinks."

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[204] Referred to in "Danny In Charge"

[205] "Joey, Stacy, and…Oh, Yeah, Jesse," mentioned in original airing.

[206] "Slumber Party," she walks home from Lisa's house in them

"Joey, they call him that because of his defensive prowess. Although I think his offense was good enough that year he should have won the MVP in 1987. Anyway, his first name is Ozzie, so it can be Oz like in the movie, or 'ahhhs' like 'ooohs and ahhhs.'"

They went on like that for a while. Finally, though Uncle Jesse didn't like sports, he offered to bring Michelle for a couple innings, and Dad, Joey, D.J., and I all went early for the night game. And, I do mean early. You see, Ozzie Smith hadn't had time to sign my huge load of stuff this evening at the game, when just Dad and I went. So, we asked a nice usher when the team arrived, and we waited the next day.

Dad convinced me to whittle down my group of items to one per person. I recognized the man I'd fallen in love with after watching him on TV several times, and once in person. "Mr. Smith," I cried out, holding out a program. He walked over to us. "Mr. Smith, I'm Stephanie Tanner. I had a bunch of things for you to sign, but my dad said just one per person in our family, I hope that's no problem."

"Well, that's quite all right," he said politely as he began signing. "You've got a bit of a wait before the game."

"That's okay; knowing her she'll end up talking to every fan here," Dad said. "I mean, she just goes on and on about so many things, it's incredible."

I showed what he meant when I rapidly asked, "Did you ever take ballet? You look so graceful out there; you must have taken ballet sometime. Here, this one's for my sister, D.J.; she's never been big into sports autographs; she's waiting for a boyfriend." D.J. gave me a look. "This one's for Michelle, but we're keeping it back for her, because she'd just scribble on it now. She's coming later with our Uncle Jesse; he and my dad's best friend Joey are living with us since our mom died. Do your Wizard of Oz impression for him, Joey," Stephanie finally finished.

"Uh, Steph, I have a talk show, if you want to mention that," Dad said.

"True. But, I thought he'd rather hear Joey instead," I remarked, enjoying Joey's comedy and impressions a lot more than talk shows.

Dad spoke with him a moment, too, and we all thanked him. Dad's favorite teams were all San Francisco ones, but he was never into autographs. Michelle liked players who were nice guys, that was her big thing; she didn't have one favorite team.

He did eventually get Ozzie Smith on his show in 2002, when he made the Hall of Fame. It's a good thing, too, because it was almost impossible to get tickets otherwise.

D.J. – Sun., Aug. 13 - On Danny's Regimentation:

Dad had everything so organized, I thought he'd have us take a change of clothes on every boating trip in Hawaii.[207] Maybe he thought if things were organized enough, he wouldn't need to do it, because Dad never disciplined Michelle.

Things had settled down by earlier this summer. Michelle liked obeying me, and stopped right away if any of us caught her as she was about to do something naughty.

Still, she had times when it was very necessary for me to do it. It is for anyone, hence the name "Terrible Twos." It's when kids learn they're independent of Mommy and Daddy, and when they have to obey and when they can act on their own.

Hers was better than some, of course. She never threw big tantrums, or hurt anyone. Her misbehavior was more the sneaky type, and that would be avoided

[207] In "Tanner Island," your "pen pal" continues the "Gilligan's Island" joke – begun with the name of the episode - by having things suddenly appear a couple times just as on "Gilligan's Island."

somewhat by the fact we were all there, It couldn't be stopped totally, though.

Uncle Jesse was even willing to let me know; usually not in so many words, but on rare occasions, he told me if she needed a timeout. Those were forgotten once Dad started punishing. When she got most upset at him, she'd done something really naughty days earlier, so she was in a bit more trouble.

Now, my main focus could be on Junior High, and budgeting my time better.

Jesse:

Danny's regimentation prevented Michelle from potty training as fast, too. He needed to let her potty train herself rather than asking every few minutes if she had to go. Of course, I was a bit too laid back, but with lots of help from Joey and D.J., we'd done it. Joey even did the voice of a potty - I didn't want to think about that one.

Michelle was starting to learn to count well, and not just because she heard D.J. count. It's true, that helped her learn to obey by a certain number so she wouldn't get a timeout, but Steph also unwittingly helped when playing hide and seek by telling her to count to a high number for a nearly three-year-old, like 100. Michelle would come ask one of us what came next. It came slowly, but she learned to count quite well.

3-1 Tanner Island Aug. 13-20, 1989

Becky – Aug. 23 – On Raising Teenagers:

The guys were having trouble coming to grips with raising a teenager. Danny started to do better with Stephanie when it came to makeup – and did much better at letting go once Michelle was that age. Of course, it was still very difficult for him to discuss things such as puberty with any of them, so D.J. and I wound up doing that with the others. Not only that, but I think the real issue was not that he didn't understand, but that change was so hard for him; much harder without Pam.

I think he let the girls date alone with boys at 13[208] - like Joey would with his – because he wanted to give them a little freedom, but wasn't sure how. He would have relied on Pam a lot. Usually, he seemed torn between going with the flow around us and letting themdate early, and being overly protective about dates. Still, dating at 13 ws one little thing that showed he trusted them, even if he held back on other things.

When our kids were old enough to date, we had stricter limits; no dating alone till age 16, though they could go in groups before. It was my conservative Midwestern nature plus Jesse's concerns.[209] Danny might have been less worried about the other stuff if he'd had such a rule. I suspect that had Pam lived, D.J. would have had less freedom to be alone with boys – maybe 15, though, not 16 – but been more accepting of all the rules, since Pam would have made sure Danny didn't go overboard.

3- 2 Back to School Blues Aug. 28, 1989

Danny – Sept. 1 – New playgroup doesn't last:

Michelle played with a couple kids from Steph's old playgroup last year a little, but by now, all the kids in that group were in school. I wanted to start a small group for

[208] D.J. in "Just Say No Way," Steph in "All Stood Up," book "Ten Ways To Wreck A Date," etc.

[209] In "Double Trouble," Jesse says if it's a girl she won't date till she's 35. He worries elsewhere about guys like him. Becky's conservative, but not really strict. "Groups till 16" is a logical rule for them, and would fit her Nebraska roots.

her, and contacted some parents, mostly through the ones in the old playgroup. We had it on Saturday, although today was different because several had scheduling conflicts. Next week, we had to move it to Sunday. It was really hard to get everyone on the same page. I could see why Pam had it so we each took a different day. I just didn't want to do that right away till Michelle got used to it; kids need time to get used to things.

For about a month, while the puppies were here, Michelle did go to a few of the other parents' houses a few times, but we never really managed to find a consistent time. Then, I got a bit nervous for her because of the earthquake, and kept her at home, though she was okay. However, while the group didn't last, we did discover that she could be away from us for a couple hours a day. This was what helped convince me to send her to preschool in the spring, as it would be the same amount of time.

3- 3 Breaking up is Hard to Do (in 22 Minutes) Sept. 1-2, 1989

D.J. – Tues., Sept. 5 – First meeting guidance counselor, frustrated about Michelle:

Once you get to Junior High, you get a guidance counselor, which made me feel so grown up! I told mine, Mrs. Myer, that at our first meeting. It was a scheduled one, to see how we were coping as incoming seventh graders. I shared my interests and goals. Then, I told her about my family, especially how Dad never disciplined Michelle.

"How does that make you feel?"

"Not too stressed; I do it, and she's not bad right now," I said matter-of-factly.

"And, your dad supports you?" I said he did, and explained how I reacted to things and how I disciplined, though Dad wouldn't let me call it "punishment." "That makes sense. He sounds like he feels powerless, though he shouldn't with a child that age. But, while this is not an excuse to take advantage, he could also feel powerless to stop you from correcting Michelle – or be made to, anyway."

"I never thought of it like that, but that's true."

"Sudden death can make someone feel very powerless. How was he before?" I told her things I recalled or had heard. "He sounds like someone who would take a tragic death very hard. You're lucky in one way. He isn't like some who can't clothe or feed kids or anything, they're so depressed." I felt better, knowing it wasn't as bad as it could be. "Still, it sounds like your Uncle Jesse and Joey are following suit."

I agreed. "It helps to know I'm not as bad off as I could be; wow, if I had to do all that…" My head spun. "Still, it can be frustrating how they let her treat them; and yet, I don't want to have to worry about being tied down handling her."

"You've got the power to set limits and discipline," she encouraged me. "That's the most important. Pick your battles. Let someone like your uncle's girlfriend handle some things. She can try to talk to Michelle and to your dad about things." I agreed, that was a good plan. "Your dad needs to know he has power, too. And, anytime you have questions or concerns, come talk to me, and we can strategize."

I said I would; I never imagined how much I would.

3- 4 Nerd for a Day Sept. 5-6, 1989

Stephanie:

I didn't like it when Uncle Jesse made me call Walter to apologize for teasing him, but I called. Things went the same way with Michelle. She'd gripe, "D.J. says I can't have dessert," once in a great while. Then, Dad or the others would tell her D.J. was

making a good rule and she had to listen. Then, she'd obey.

D.J. wouldn't have as much time the first week or two of Junior High, but she'd figure out how to get more time. She just acted so superior, like the world she was living in was so unbelievably awesome. So, I had to look in her diary.

D.J. – Her Major Error in Dealing with Stephanie:

I confess. I talked enough about my world being so different and wonderful and better than hers, I made my personal things way too appealing to Stephanie. I should have talked more often about boring parts, but I felt like I had to brag.

In November, my guidance counselor, Mrs. Myer, suggested I acted this way because I felt such pressure to make sure Michelle behaved. And, I was concerned I'd feel pressured to be Mom's replacement in everything Steph did. I think she was right about my worries; Dad ignoring things and my concerns over how bad things could get really affected me. It didn't make the way I acted right, though.

Mom would have seen this problem right away; Dad and the others never did. If I'd tried to be a mother figure, I wouldn't have been so standoffish, and I'd have been fine. There are times when I really wish I'd been proactive. I didn't catch on to how much Steph still wanted to hang out with me, and I should have. Again, Mom would have caught it and helped me understand. My life was still too much of a forbidden fruit, even after I started to attend more of Steph's activities. Snooping was too much fun for her.

I noticed Michelle and Stephanie were like that a bit. I didn't say much till after Michelle's accident, though. After that, they were becoming close, anyway.

3- 5 Granny Tanny Sept. 9, 1989

Jesse – Sun., Sept. 10 – Stephanie and Tree Climbing Contests:

Steph really made me proud standing up for Walter. She even got him interested in one of her favorite pursuits; tree climbing in the park.

Allie and her played girl stuff, especially with Michelle, but she was into physical stuff, too, like kickball and other outdoor things. Today, she showed how she'd grown as a friend by challenging the boys to a tree climbing contest.

She didn't like really tall heights, but when a smaller, Kindergarten kid climbed too high, Steph scaled that tree like you wouldn't believe to rescue her. Of course, Joey and me had to coax her down, but we did it, and Harry said it didn't matter after that who won, they'd all call her the champion on the playground.

Stephanie – Jesse's Bird in the Hair Problem:

Uncle Jesse wouldn't want this repeated, of course, but the problem wasn't just that D.J. and Kimmy were helping to watch the girl, and D.J. slightly twisted her ankle – it was better the next day – and Kimmy was lazy. See, Uncle Jesse had a bird do in his hair what they usually do in cars. He was very distracted, especially with Kimmy's comments. Dad was home with Michelle, and he was so proud of me; he also took time to laugh at Uncle Jesse, too.

3- 6 Star Search Sept. 20-Sat., Oct. 7, 1989

Jesse - Fri., Sept. 15, 1989 - Comet's entrance:

This was one of those days I thought about how different my life was. While I

loved the girls, I thought to myself, "What's going on here?"

A dog came into our yard. She had puppies, and suddenly, I was a dog breeder. I had to sleep on that rollaway Joey had slept on while Minnie and her litter of puppies slept in my bed. Oh, don't get me wrong, they were cute little critters. They couldn't even open their eyes for days, and they looked so helpless.[210] I guess they were growing on me a little. But, I really hoped someone would answer the ad we put in the paper soon.

3- 7 And They Call It Puppy Love Fri., Sept. 15-Oct. 15, 1989

Danny - Sept. 21:

Mom had retired and was moving down here. She spoke of moving back to Connecticut someday, but for right now, she'd be in the area. We needed her, too; even with all of D.J.'s and Steph's friends, the puppies took lots of time and energy.

Their owner hadn't shown up yet, and I was just about ready to start promising each of the girls' friends they could take one home if they pledged to take good care of it. We still had weeks, though, before they could be separated from the mother.

Joey, Sept. 24:

I realized I had two weeks to meet my deadline to be on Johnny Carson.[211] It was a welcome break from the puppies. They still nursed and rested often with their mom, Minnie, in Jesse's bed, at only a little over a week old. And, those puppies heard more jokes than you can imagine in those two weeks.

We were so busy, we missed Danny's mom's actual move. She found a place and moved in on the last day of the month. We kidded her that it was just in time to dog-sit.

D.J. - Sept. 28:

We finally got a call from the owner. He'd just moved to San Jose,[212] and one of his friend had seen our ad and called him. He didn't have time to get new tags for Minnie or even to get the local paper. And, then there was another problem.

He was calling from South Korea.

His company had sent him there on business. He'd graduated from the College of Wooster in Ohio, and worked in Wooster before coming out here. A friend was supposed to watch Minnie, but left the gate open once. So, she'd wandered up here.

Danny:

I figured we'd be delivering a dog and a bunch of helpless puppies to someone. After all, after a week, they still didn't do very much, and successful weaning couldn't be finished before three weeks. Kimmy's vet had told us four weeks is the minimum recommended, with lots of socializing and being around other dogs after that.

By the time the owner came to get the puppies, they were happy, healthy, moving around, and able to be taken all over the house. If we weren't careful, they'd be into everything. At least I love cleaning, though getting those blankets under them and

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[210] The puppies look bigger because just-born puppies don't make good props.

[211] "Star Search" - an episode must be imbedded in the time puppies mature since as noted they couldn't be weaned till 3 weeks, and 4 is better. This episode works very well. They wouldn't be out of Jesse's room much at the start, and scenes at the Tanners could be with the puppies still upstairs.

[212] He offers to let them drive out and see them, so he lived somewhat close.

washing them every day was a real chore, even for me.

Stephanie - Oct. 7, 1989 - Allie, the piano, etc.:

Allie's dad worked in a factory, and was laid off a few times before they moved, including when we had Minnie and the puppies. Allie and I would have been in the same district when we redistricted. But she moved just before D.J. left for Spain. I didn't say anything by the time D.J. came home, but part of why I missed D.J. so much was losing Allie. Still, I met other friends, who I'd never hung out with before, in fifth grade.[213]

Anyway, Allie and her parents helped a lot, and Dad paid them to stay at our place and take care of the dogs while we all watched Joey in the "Star Search" audience. It was a great way to help someone less fortunate, like the Taylors, too.

We even felt comfortable letting Allie play our piano by now. She took piano lessons; that and ballet were among few frills her family could afford. Mom had taken lessons when she was young, too. Grandma Irene and Grandpa Nick bought our piano as a Sweet Sixteen present for Mom, and she moved it here when we bought the house. By now, most of that sadness had worn off, but none of us ever took lessons.

Danny – Naming and Training Comet:

Minnie's owner called while we were away. He'd be back the 14th and pick up the dogs the next day. By then, the puppies would be moving a lot, with their eyes open. Four weeks was a good time. When he offered to let us keep one, it could be separated from its mother successfully. We named him soon after the owner let us keep Comet.[214] The earthquake distracted us a bit, then.

We still had more to do. We had to take our new puppy to doggie play groups so he'd be around puppies and continue the education he'd had before now.

The first weeks are spent with the puppies nipping at each other and pawing each other and learning what was proper doggie behavior and what kind would bring a growl or a more painful bite back. Comet had begun that training with the litter, but consistent socializing afterward was mandatory to enable him to become the sedate, peaceful dog he did. After all, we didn't want him barking too much, being too fearful, or snapping at other dogs. And, I certainly never wanted him snapping at the girls.

Thankfully, they weren't too physical with him, but Michelle jerked his tail a few times because kids near three do that sometimes. D.J. raised her timeout to three minutes, and started putting her in her room instead of the corner for when she did something naughty. The problem ended fast with her.

Jesse – Comet's Good Nature, Breeding Him At First:

Comet was real easy to handle, too; so much that – not knowing what I was doing – I thought of breeding him, helped by an advertising client.[215] His personality helped a lot. But, most of why he was so good was the vet and a local trainer. We paired Comet with puppies he could play and mingle with. This interaction let him be okay with other

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[213] "Come Fly With Me", other season 6 episodes. A move that June wouldn't be mentioned by August. If she'd known either Jennifer long before they'd have known Stephanie didn't have pierced ears later.

[214] "Dr. Dare Rides Again," time unknown as it's a teaser. Not all dogs are named right away, and as will be shown with season 4, teasers can happen anytime.

[215] In the "Fuller House" series, it's mentioned Cosmo is a direct descendant of Comet. While Danny would naturaly get him neutered, you'll see how both happen.

dogs and us. The girls thought it was normal for dogs to hang out together; that's why Steph had the idea of a birthday party for Comet, and why we had a neighborhood dog show once.[216] He also helped when Kimmy's dog died and she got a new one.[217]

D.J. – Oct. 17 – The Earthquake and Consequences: [218]

"I must really be hungry," Joey said at 5:04 PM, as the house began shaking. He picked Michelle up and dove under the table as the lights went out.

"It's not your stomach, it's an earthquake, doofus," Uncle Jesse said as he dove.

Stephanie had leaped into my arms as we ducked under the table, and things fell off our shelves. "Daddy!" she cried several times. Heavy shaking continued for fifteen seconds. Only a little light from outside shone. "D.J., are we gonna die?"

I tried to keep calm. "We'll be okay, Steph. I'm right here," I promised.

Kimmy was at home. She'd later say, "If the Cubs made the World Series, people would have thought it was the end of the world." They'd last made it there in 1945, and last won it in 1908. Steph wasn't too sure it wasn't the end; she was trembling as I kept cradling her. We did earthquake drills, but nothing prepares you for a real one.

Uncle Jesse came up once the shaking ended; our electricity was out, but it wasn't dark enough for him to need a flashlight, though we would in the basement. "Let's get in the basement, Joey took Michelle there." He carried Steph - who was just weeping now, though she still looked really scared - and I followed.

Michelle was too young to understand. With the power out, we ate everything in the refrigerator and freezer, including ice cream. Joey acting like it was a game helped some, though she had one somewhat scary dream. A few area kids had problems. One of Steph's classmates, Rita, was injured. She scared quite easily later.[219]

Steph was really bothered by the quake, though. Despite all our playing and distracting, she kept worrying because Dad was late. The next couple nights, I woke up and went to her bed to comfort her - she woke up crying and shaking. Dad heard us, and came in to comfort us, too.

I did little things, like play Barbies with Steph, over the next week. I didn't say why I was doing it. I thought not mentioning it would help. Then, she seemed better. That made our fight the day before the carnival worse than it should have been.

An aftershock came early the afternoon of the carnival. I couldn't help but wonder if she'd wanted to hang around me because she was still scared, though during this aftershock Dad was home. So, I went to the carnival with her. I acted reluctant, because I still felt anxiety about Dad making me do it all.

That helped in the short term, but we had garbage trucks running around yet three weeks after the quake, though they'd stop in a few days. That made things a little worse after the November first aftershock, the night after Uncle Jesse almost pulled his Dr. Dare stunt. Steph was already asleep then, so she clung to Dad much more, till she got help.

All that would have happened even if I'd been proactive, putting my sisters first like a mother, but the fight never would have then.

At least after a few months, I tried to understand and work with Steph more. I

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[216] "One Last Kiss" and "The Volunteer," also how good he is with other dogs in the book "A Dog's Life"
[217] Kimmy clearly needed a new one in that 99% of the time we don't see what happens.
[218] A historical quake, certainly the one mentioned, as are the two aftershocks.
[219] "Driving Miss D.J.," plausible even if the actress overacted, such trauma could occur if Rita was hurt.

realized Dad wouldn't leave me working with her as much as he had with Michelle.

3- 8 Divorce Court	Oct. 27-8, 1989
3- 9 Dr. Dare Rides Again	Oct. 30-1, 1989

Becky – Oct. 31:

I couldn't believe Jesse almost pulled that Dr. Dare stunt. I actually slapped him, though I didn't do it hard and I could never hit one of the kids. I felt badly, but D.J. told me, from what Jesse had told her, that Pam had felt the same way. She'd just calmed down by the time she got to him, though her lecture was quite dramatic, considering how excitable she'd get. Jesse related many things from when Pam was alive. Not everything, I'm sure. However, it was always fun to go over there and hear them talk about her.

Jesse:

I was rebelling just because I wanted to prove I was the same. However, when I got my motorcycle up there, I felt something in my heart. I can't really describe it, but it felt like it used to when Pam would get after me. That "little voice" inside me often sounded like her, anyway, when I was a kid. I knew I'd made a decision to change my ways; why was I trying to go back to the way I was?

Every time something from my past came into my life, I faced a choice - old life or new one. The new creature I'd become was so much better, more rewarding, more fulfilling. And yet, there's always part trying to drag someone back to their old ways. That's what backsliding is, when you keep following those old ways again, till God has to bring you back to Him much more forcefully.

I attended church less than the girls. Still, I knew there was something about God only testing us with what we're able to handle, and Him providing a way out of anything. We just have to be smart enough to take it.

He kept giving me freedom, because He loved me, and wanted to see what I'd do. He knew I wouldn't stick with dumb things for long. However, I had to keep from making a choice so dumb I didn't have a chance to change my mind. And, I sensed if I did this one, I might have suffered serious consequences. So, I didn't.

D.J. – Nov. 1:

Grandpa Nick and Grandma Irene came over. We told them what Jesse almost did. Grandpa looked a little pale. He said everything was okay, so I didn't worry.

Grandpa asked if I was still disciplining Michelle. I said the guys would put her down for a nap if she was cranky, but that was it. I took privileges away, and her timeouts were now three minutes. And, it made sense not to call it punishment, in a way - that to me was always ten minutes in our room, fifteen when older. That, plus my scolding a little sometimes, worked well with her.

Anyway, Grandpa talked about Greece in the 1940s. He reminded me never to touch Michelle when I was really angry, and always to be in control when I disciplined. I always followed those rules anyway, but I easily understood him wanting to make sure.

Joey – Aftershocks' placement and the "Christmas" play:

Steph was clingier and crawled into Danny's bed more after the aftershock on the 1st. Eventually, we convinced him to get her help; thankfully she just needed one visit.

Kimmy, meanwhile, was just weird. She and D.J. were in the drama club. Soon after the quake, Kimmy got the committee to plan a Christmas play in early November. Her reason? To take peoples' minds off the earthquake. Except for sticking out like a sore thumb on the calendar it wasn't bad.[220]

3-11 Aftershocks	Nov. 6-8, 1989
3-10 The Greatest Birthday on Earth	Nov. 8-12, 1989

Danny - Monday, November 13, 1989 – "D.J. is Michelle's real boss," says doctor:

Jesse figured out a way to give Michelle a fun birthday party while locked in a gas station, thanks to a very absent-minded owner who didn't check the restrooms. He really had bonded quite well with Michelle.

Not only that, but she listened so well, I figured I was the best dad in the world. I thought we had this awesome kid who just knew how to listen because we talked to her. I mean, she knew what "bad" meant. When I said I was a "bad boy" for not explaining things well enough, she would say, "Go to your room."[221]

I was dumbfounded, then, when I took Michelle to her well-child checkup today. I started telling Dr. Landress about her behavior. He said it was normal and showed she was well adjusted. However, she only obeyed me because D.J. told her to listen.

Dr. Landress said she'd be much more out of control if D.J. hadn't taught her that her actions can have negative consequences. In fact, he said it appeared I was allowing D.J. to replace Pam in my mind and Michelle's.

"It's not uncommon, Mr. Tanner," he told me. "Some parents try too hard to be their child's friend, and don't realize the need to enforce limits. Especially with single fathers, there's a feeling that they need to be the nurturer, but they fail to recall that that nurturing mother also disciplines. And, it's through being disciplined in a loving way by that nurturing caregiver that a child learns the bond will still be there when they mess up. So, they can grow up healthy and happy, knowing how to stay within the rules."

"And, you're saying D.J. is the one teaching her that?"

He nodded. "She could not have learned to behave as well as she does without your oldest daughter's help. Which is where that discipline comes from quite often in such cases, from an older sibling, usually a sister. Stephanie probably helps a little, and it sounds like Joey has removed things a few times; but remember that at her age, if it's not removed immediately, it will be hard to have it be effective. It's mostly D.J. whose rule Michelle respects because she's much older and consistent."

I didn't want to believe it. But, Dr. Landress asked Michelle questions about listening, and doing what she was told. Michelle knew certain things were "bad," but told him she always listened to me "'cause D.J. says." And, she knew certain things like coloring on walls were bad because D.J. had put her in timeout.

Still, Dr. Landress said that this was okay for now. If she replaced "D.J." with "Mommy" in that sentence, it would be completely normal. So, I pushed that to the back of my mind. I thought of her as very well adjusted. After all, the doctor said Michelle could transition to me punishing her now, and it wouldn't take long, though it would be harder than it had been with D.J., as Pam was there all the time with D.J..

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[220] Kimmy causes date confusion otherwise, and everything points to this being the historical quake; they wouldn't have even had a quake episode otherwise, so it must be considered the historical one.

[221] "And They Call it Puppy Love," teasers can be anytime earlier if not connected to the episode.

He said the longer I waited, the harder it would be. I didn't want to think about that. Dr. Landress was right, but I told myself that she knew what being "bad" meant. As it turned out, she only knew because D.J. always sent her to her room for being "bad."

Dr. Landress – Trying To Help:

I said he was treating D.J. like a babysitter. She could discipline as a sitter, but this had to be putting stress on her, too. I focused on what I thought was the real problem. "It was hard losing Pam, wasn't it?" I said lowly while Michelle colored in a book once we were done. I'd had one single parent, when they knew they could trust me, who admitted not a day went by they didn't cry over such a loss. Part of me wondered if Mr. Tanner might say this, though having Jesse and Joey there would help; the other one didn't have such a support system. He didn't say it, however.

"I won't deny it's been rough," he confessed, "but we're making it."

"I just wonder if you're trying to let D.J. replace your late wife. I'm not ordering grief counseling or anything. You are doing very well; Michelle is growing well in every area. I just want you to see," I said positively, "you are a good father. I know your wife was the one to deal with the girls when they were little. D.J. likely knows more than Jesse or Joey, even if she didn't learn everything." Danny agreed. "Ask her advice when correcting Michelle. What do Jesse and Joey do to correct her?"

"Well, Jesse still has those 'famous talks,' and sometimes Joey can remove a privilege without melting at her cute, little, adorable face." He sighed as I gave a concerned look. "Okay, I guess I do that a lot."

I warned, "As she near four she'll learn to manipulate that if you're not careful. D.J. is the only one to isolate?" She was. "Mr. Tanner, I would rather see you punishing her with that. I don't know what D.J.'s stress level is like, but I think it's worth talking about when she comes in for her checkup."

"That's fine, Doc; I don't think she has a problem, though."

I agreed. "Your oldest daughter is a high achiever. She has great drive and determination. I just don't want to see her burned out. Does she talk to her guidance counselor about this at school?" She did. "With your permission, Mr. Tanner, I'd like to contact her counselor, just to compare notes and see how we can help."

"You don't think there's a problem, do you?" he asked, concerned.

If I'd said "yes," it might have started him disciplining, but I would not lie to my clientele. It was wrong, and if he slacked off later and there was no problem, I wouldn't have kept his trust if a problem did arise. So, I told the truth.

"I don't think there's a problem yet. But, until you're ready, Mr. Tanner, D.J. may feel stress from this, even though Michelle is very well behaved; you've got a kid where three may be a sweet, if a little demanding, age with few problems. The more people D.J. can turn to for guidance, though, the better it will be." Mr. Tanner gave me Mrs. Myer's name and number. We compared notes later this week. "Thanks. As I say, you need to start soon; she only obeys you because D.J. has taught her she should. I'm not doing this so you can slack off and keep seeing her as a baby," I said with a smile. "This is to help D.J. to cope better with whatever you're struggling with." He thanked me.

Stephanie – Dec. 11 – On Disciplining Comet – The Squirter:

As much as Dad tried to talk to Comet, something else was needed to get through the puppy phase; especially after he went after Mr. Bear and other things in his chewing stage. He ate the head off of a few things that didn't matter as much, too.[222]

We could never hit. We started putting him in a cage in the basement weeks ago, but today we heard a much better idea from one of the Honeybee moms.

Their family used a squirt bottle if their dog was into something he shouldn't be. Comet hated the suddenness of getting squirted, so it was a very effective punishment.

We started squirting for bad behavior a few days later. He got to where he didn't even want to be around a spray bottle for a little while after this Christmas, a time he was into a lot of stuff. However, that didn't last long. He was very good natured, so we didn't have to squirt him much; he learned very quickly what he could and couldn't do, and the lessons stuck. Part of that was with everyone here, we were very consistent.

Nobody ever got really carried away with squirting people, but Michelle needed timeout a couple times when she wouldn't stop. However, it was just as likely that she and Uncle Jesse would have a playful squirt bottle battle while doing the plants. Squirting as punishment never worked on Michelle, though I think D.J. wishes it had.

Joey – Dec. 16:

This was proof to Jesse that intelligence wasn't just about book smarts. He never went to college – we all knew that when he told us. He insisted that ideas like using a squirt bottle on a dog were just proof that you didn't have to read books to survive in the real world. Of course, he still didn't think one should have to watch cartoons to do it, but he had a point. He soon realized that Becky loved him just as he was, too, despite how smart some of her friends seemed. These were people she mostly knew through college, and through her work interviewing such people back in Omaha.

3-13 No More Mr. Dumb Guy Dec. 15-16, 1989

Stephanie - Dec. 19 - Jesse and class trips, parties, Christmas:

Uncle Jesse was a mystery. He hadn't gone to college, and usually he didn't seem to care. He often told us not to worry about what others thought of us. And yet, at times, he felt like he had to measure up to smarter people.

It makes sense in retrospect, because his dropping out of high school gnawed at him. He needed an outlet to show he was just as good without having to admit that he had dropped out of school. Hence, one more problem that resulted from not only dropping out, but also from not dealing with that situation when he realized the need.

He was wonderful with my class, though, when it came to chaperoning field trips. I even helped keep some kids in line at the dairy farm, fire station, etc. By fourth grade, of course, I was more tactful. Still, I loved to help anywhere. At this point, of course, I relied on the teacher to control wilder kids, and helped slightly less unruly kids in his group if we separated, for the most part.

Little did he know that helping our class and encouraging me would help me a few years later in my leadership role. There was the danger a time or two over the years

[222] One of Michelle's toys ("Road To Tokyo" teaser) and one of Joey's slippers ("Grand Gift Auto") – they could have been chewed later, but there is no consistent path of destruction, so these were likely chewed early and the phase ends fast, else there would have been much more destruction.

that his groups would have been as wild as the one in the museum with Michelle.

Today, Uncle Jesse did our class Christmas party. Joey loved hosting parties, but Uncle Jesse enjoyed it even more. After all, it's something our mom cherished so much. He came up with great games, though the one with funny song titles might have been a bit advanced. There's a great tape, though, of me at home beforehand trying to talk out what "Cincinnati's Russian shortstop is aware of precipitation, Darling" meant. I guessed precipitation was rain right away – we studied weather that year in school. Joey helped with the baseball team's name, the Reds, where I knew a shortstop would be. With red and rain, I just kept muttering till I said "the Red knows." Then, my eyes lit up, and I leaped off the couch and shrieked "Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer" like I'd just won a prize on some game show.

Dad told Allie and I about the real Nicholas, too. He lived so far back, when Dad said the year I thought he meant the time. I looked at my watch and said, "430, that's just fifteen minutes from now." To add fun to the story, Dad made himself the man with three daughters who had the same names. And, if he didn't find dowries for each of us, we'd have to be old maid servants to Kimmy.

Dad told us how this rich guy named Nicholas learned of the poor man's plight, and gave him money to give the handsome prince who loved D.J., and Nicholas came back to help the next two get married, also.

It was wonderful, and helped us realize St. Nicholas - Santa Claus - was a symbol of giving. I'd doubted before, as had Allie, but now we understood completely.

I still don't know about the poor man being a town crier with a show called "Wake Up, Antioch," though. Or about his brother-in-law saying "Elvis is Caesar."

Jesse - Sun., Dec. 24, 1989 – First Christmas in Nebraska, not meeting parents:

Christmas with Becky was awesome. I only wished we weren't scheduled to fly to her parents'. All things considered, I wished I was in Graceland.

Still, we'd finally agreed to it after arguing about where to spend Christmas. So, her parents could finally meet me.[223] The first picture I gave Becky, to send to her mom, was from when I still had long hair, and I was sitting on my motorcycle.[224]

When we got to Nebraska, her folks had been hurt in a car accident, skidding on a slippery road. I couldn't believe it. I thought they must have hit the only tree in that state, although it's not nearly as flat and clear as I made it out to be. It wasn't serious, but they would be in the hospital till after we were due to leave.

This was especially frustrating because the one time I could have met them, over Thanksgiving, Becky's mom's mother was very sick, and like a good husband her dad had gone with her to see her in Lincoln. They didn't think she'd make it, but she did. I know, not the best impression, huh? But, this was supposed to be the time when she could show me off to them.

Of course, being the dummy I was, I suggested we pay our respects and then go to Graceland. She said I could go there myself. Then, when I balked at that, she just shook her head and left me at her folks' place. I was with a bunch of people I didn't know while she was at the hospital for a couple hours Christmas Eve. She figured this wasn't the time for her parents to be meeting new people, while they wee hurting like that.

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[223] "Misadventures in Babysitting," they wouldn't argue over Christmas in January when it airs

[224] "The Wedding"

That Christmas was still special, though. I wanted to spend it with her wherever I was. She was glad I'd stayed - she knew I would, though her mom wasn't sure.

At the time of our wedding, her siblings were pretty quiet, since we had center stage. They all managed to come, but only one – the sister she was closest to – was in the wedding party. They loved the area, and were glad to see I wasn't totally Elvis-crazy like I'd appeared. Of course, even here, at least her kid brother did Elvis impressions, too.

Becky - Dec. 26:

I have to give Jesse credit for sticking with me back then. It was rough; I didn't want to leave his side, but I knew my parents probably needed help, too. They didn't meet him till our wedding. I went to Graceland with him New Years' Eve. I didn't know why, but there was something special about Jesse that made me glad I'd done it once.

3-15 Lust in the Dust Jan. 6, 1990

Joey: Michelle a Very Good Girl Now:

Thankfully, things went very well with Michelle. The girls got Dad and Steph's dance teacher alone, and Michelle turned to Danny and complained that she had to eat in her room. He said she didn't, but Michelle calmly said D.J. had told her, and took lunch upstairs. They said they had homework, but instead, they ate lunch with her, praising her big time for obeying.[225]

This kind of thing, plus her knowing it was possible to be bad and what it meant, never could have come without someone disciplining; it was almost always D.J., but Steph impressed us a bit tomorrow, though just doing what she'd do with a doll.

Danny – Sun., Jan. 7, 1990 – Stephanie disciplines Michelle once:

Steph had just come from Allie's; D.J. was at the mall. Michelle was usually very good at going up and taking a nap. She'd sleep, being 38 months old. However, she was more wired with sweets today, and woke up. Nobody was listening to the monitor, but Steph was upstairs playing, so we figured she'd hear when Michelle awakened.

She did. I heard her loud, scolding shout of "Michelle!" from the hall. I stopped cleaning the windows and called out asking what had happened.

"Michelle," I said as I entered my room, "you know not to throw Daddy's baking soda around like that." She gave me an ornery look and poured more onto the floor.

"No, Michelle; bad girl!" Stephanie scolded as I took the box. "You didn't obey Daddy; that was bad. Go to your room!" Michelle wept as she went and sat in a little chair in her room, which Stephanie turned against the wall.

"Aw, it's okay, Steph. Little kids get into things at her age." I could tell she was hurt seeing Michelle like that. We sat outside Michelle's door, and I cuddled Stephanie. "Tell you what; I'll move my box of baking soda to the top drawer."

"Okay. I'm sorry I made her cry. I just did like I would playing with a doll. It's so hard, though. I don't like seeing her cry."

"I know. You're a wonderful, loving girl." I kissed her on the forehead. "I'm very proud of how well you listen and follow the rules."

"Thanks, Dad. I just want Michelle to learn the same thing."

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[225] "Lust in the Dust," with "Bye Bye, Birdie" (knowing it was possible to even be a "bad girl") prime examples of knowing to listen, what being bad was

"She knows; look how she went to her room right away when you said 'bad girl.' She knows bad means she's done wrong. She's been taught well. She just tested once like lots of kids, and, she's had it reinforced that not listening gets her in trouble."

She didn't test much for a good while. She never got in my dresser again.

"How come you don't punish her? If I did that I'd go to my room like her."

"I'm not ready yet. But, you and D.J. and all of us show her the boundaries, and what right and wrong mean. She can't understand abstract concepts, so she needs concrete illustrations to establish them in her mind."

Stephanie held up a hand. "Dad, I couldn't even understand that last sentence."

"Sorry." I squeezed her and said, "It just means what you did was good." After another minute, I suggested Stephanie get her out of her punishment.

Stephanie turned the chair around as I watched. "Michelle. You knew it was bad not to obey Daddy, right?" She nodded slowly. "Next time you stay out of his dresser, right?" She sniffled and nodded. "And when we tell you 'no,' you listen. Especially when Daddy says 'no.' All right, get up. Punishment is over," she finished in a very cheerful voice. Michelle eagerly complied, and they hugged.

"That's my girl. Come on, let's clean up the mess together," I suggested. We told D.J. when she got home; she was very proud of how Stephanie handled things. Steph never punished again but little things were building that would help Michelle listen to her better later, like when she corrected for calling me "dude" and D.J. backed her up.

Becky – Jan. 14 – School Decisions:

Danny was pretty protective, but decided Michelle could be in preschool.

Most kids started in the fall, so the others, like Aaron, had been there. He was actually good at sharing – which is like Kimmy being great at driving later; anyone can be good at a few things. He was wild otherwise, though.

After a rough first day that Tuesday – Monday was Martin Luther King Day - Michelle got along well there; she was really hard on herself for letting that bird go, she clearly knew right from wrong.

All the girls were well-behaved at school, except for little things. Even without Pam dying, they'd have put Steph in full-day Kindergarten. She'd have been bored with half a day. They'd have moved Steph back to the half day program only if she needed extra family time, but she handled things as well as could be expected.

Stephanie – Fri., Jan. 19 – On D.J.'s Diary Entries about Kimmy:

I couldn't help but giggle as we were getting dressed. D.J. asked me what was funny. "Oh, nothing." That didn't convince her. Before thinking, I blurted, "I can't stop thinking about Kimmy wanting to buy Turtle Wax for our turtle. And then she spread a rumor in fifth grade about ants in the cafeteria food, because of the aunts who worked there. Even you wonder about her brain." I covered my mouth. "Oops."

"You read what I wrote about Kimmy doing that?!" she asked in disbelief.

"I read it last week." I knew if Kimmy knew what D.J. had written, it could hurt their friendship. As I told D.J., though, "Just because I can't stand Kimmy doesn't mean I'd tell something like that, though. Hurting a friendship like that would be mean. I could never do something like that to you; I love you." I knew wrecking a friendship like that

would have been absolutely wrong.

D.J.'s harsh look softened. "I guess you have kept that to yourself."

"I'd never want anyone to tell things I think sometimes," I said compassionately as I walked over to D.J.. "I'd never tell Kimmy anything you write." I never told what D.J. thought of her, or clued her in when D.J. hinted at it.[226]

D.J. smiled, and put an arm around me; I could tell she was really proud of me. "Thanks, Steph. You're not so bad after all." She wasn't as upset about my snooping afterward, unless it got really bad. Sadly I kept doing it. But, at least she knew I wouldn't repeat her questions about Kimmy's brain power.

D.J. – Mon., Jan. 22 - Michelle knew right from wrong, the dog Sparky:

I was impressed, but I shouldn't have been surprised. Mom, while she was alive, and the guys since had done great at teaching right from wrong. We all did with Michelle, I just had the task of enforcing it. A few times I talked over her head, but that was just not learning as much from Mom since I was only ten when she died.

I'd learned enough, though, and times like that worked out. For instance, she tried to keep a neighbor's dog after Comet's birthday party. I explained Comet would be her size, and rewarded her for giving him back.[227]

She'd confessed, so I didn't punish her. It was one of those times Mrs. Myer's advice is very wise - "Pick your battles, you can't fight every one."

Ironically, the owner offered him to us in summer of 1991; she was old, and couldn't care for him. Dad said Comet "filled our dog quota," so she kept Sparky. A nice family bought her house, and she gave him to their boy, Teddy. [228] We were busy with vacations, so Michelle didn't meet him till Kindergarten. We took walks around the block and played in the park, so she might have seen him otherwise, but that's no guarantee, and at that age, they might not have remembered each other, anyway.

Jesse: How Michelle Learned Politeness, Not To Say "Duh," etc.:

Michelle only did as she was told because someone taught her she had to obey. It was ingrained that the rules were the rules. She never did anything real bad anymore.

For instance, D.J. and Steph ingrained in her how she shouldn't call others names. Once, D.J. put her in timeout when they said they were wrong and she kept doing it the next day. That ended fast, though.[229]

I helped here. Our band didn't curse or swear; I'd made sure they wouldn't. I also had my "famous talks" with Michelle about her behavior, usually before D.J. had to punish, sometimes after that. If she copied us, it was usually saying "duh," or things like "no way, Jose" or calling Danny "dude" when being corrected.

If D.J. learned, Michelle apologized or she got no dessert that night. If only Steph learned, she scolded her. Michelle almost always did as she was told, apologizing and saying "Yes, Daddy." So, Stephanie scolding was sometimes all that was needed. They

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[226] "Silence Is Not Golden." Steph is also nice enough to not push things when they're on the brink in "Good New, Bad News," and just telling Kimmy what D.J. planned to write may have done it.

[227] "One Last Kiss" – See later footnote on why Comet's birthday must be in September

[228] "One Last Kiss" - the dog looks the same as Teddy's.

[229] "No More Mr. Dumb Guy," she's sitting with her head down like she's been corrected, after they told her they were wrong to teach her to call others names like "chicken legs." It's not a problem later, so she listened, though it's quite possible that that night or the next day, she got punished by D.J..

worked on that, but they weren't always home.

D.J. was the only one to discipline for a couple years. So, she let Michelle sass a little. Her guidance counselor, Mrs. Myer, said you can't fight every battle. Hey, that's how we were; we weren't strict about that. She said Michelle should hear at least two praises for every negative. It took a while with the rudeness, but even that disappeared slowly, even with D.J. the only one to enforce politeness.[230]

We all praised good behavior a lot. Overall, D.J. taught her well. She was stricter than us guys, but also gave her some leeway. But, she still had that look that said, "You're at your limit."

By now, MIchelle needed timeout or lost dessert once in a while; that was all. We shudder to think how bad it would have gotten without someone disciplining early.

It got to where when she let that bird fly away in preschool, she said she was a bad girl right away, and even sat in the corner herself for a while. Just having the concept that it was possible for her to be "bad" was important.

Dr. Landress - D.J. Not Too Strict – The Two "I"'s – Doctor's Advice:

They're called the "two 'Is'." Isolate – timeout – or ignore. They mostly did the "ignore" part. When Jesse ignored Michelle taking Steph's cupcake, that was part of it. Little kids do that; you have to let them learn to work it out. They did.

I tell parents the same thing her counselor and I told D.J.; you can't fight every battle. They'd say funny things back if Michelle used names and she didn't have to be polite.[231] When a shocked response didn't come, she saw it wasn't fun. Timeout was only for worse behavior, though "no dessert" was for major rudeness.

Positive messages are vital, too, but Michelle wasn't the kind to respond to gold stars. She was so much like Jesse; it was easy for her to brush things off. D.J. tried using gold stars once, but Michelle kept adding more. She'd learned to be sneaky. Inside was a sensitive little girl. She just acted like she didn't need that at times.

They have to be expected to test a bit; they can't be so scared they become robots, it's not healthy. That was Joey's problem when little. But, kids also must learn to control themselves and accept it when corrected. Michelle did each of these well. Generally, she was very well behaved now. She had enough fun that the times she disciplined, Michelle realized it was just because she wasn't doing what was right, and needed to be good.

I just hoped Mr. Tanner started soon. I told him at Stephanie's checkup this week, they'd been lucky so far.

3-18 Mr. Egghead Jan. 18-25, 1990

Joey – Going to Daddy, nightmares, and bears:

Danny could have started punishing now, and it would have been fine. Michelle called on him more than Jesse now if she had a nightmare, just like Steph – though a few times she went to D.J. since they were in the same room.[232] Mr. Bear wasn't as much for chasing away nightmare monsters, as he was a friend who was there to get her through

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[230] Jesse says he "deserved a duh" in "The King and I," but she never calls people "dude" after age 4, and she almost never says "duh" after age 5, another sign someone had to discipline her.

[231] D.J. says "It's true, Magoo" to a "no way, Jose" ("Happy New Year" teaser)

[232] Fearing the dentist in "It's Not My Job," & after watching a scary movie in "Baby Love," she also goes to D.J. first when the ferret is heard in "Our Very First Promo."

those rare times. Anyway, Jesse had been gone over two holidays in the last couple months. So, Michelle was very comfortable with Danny being a great nurturer; he just kept trying to be her friend.

For Michelle, we came up with a trick that eliminated such nightmare monsters, though it had to be done a few times, and still had to check her closet for monsters a couple times, too. Steph and I came up with this funny routine that, when it was done, basically gave that big bear on Michelle's door – Buster Bear - a special degree in ghost busting. The girls didn't have many nightmares, anyway, but this really helped Michelle, and showed how I liked to make everything fun there.

Steph, of course, figured she should be the big sister and able to cure all problems when Michelle moved into their room. D.J. had been for her, after all. Still, she let the bear hang in the room for a while, anyway, till she felt comfortable.

Coming up with funny ways to help the girls cope with things was my specialty. I had other reasons for being there, of course. But, Danny knew I was just a big kid at heart, and all I wanted to do was make everything happy. Which meant I was a lot harder on myself if I did mess up, like with the punching machine accident.

Stephanie – Thurs., Jan. 25, 1990:

Having a broken nose was really tough, being so soon after my birthday on the 17th; we'd had the party Friday.[233] I wished I could just combine birthday pictures with school ones, I always seemed to look good on my birthday. Dad appreciated that Joey cared enough to get those toys for me; he always had a big heart and was really sensitive. Uncle Jesse told Dad exactly what happened after he ran upstairs to see how I was. Dad hadn't started to get mad yet, because his concern was always us first. Plus, he was in shock a bit as Uncle Jesse told him. Dad could tell how badly Joey felt right away.

D.J. was able to help him out of a traffic ticket that day, but he didn't want her missing any more school to try it again; he did contest it successfully, though.

D.J. felt Michelle got too many toys. Mrs. Myer suggested she could take one toy away each time she did a certain bad behavior. But, she'd never have missed one at this rate. I didn't care about all those things Joey brought me. Dad said Michelle could have them but if it were up to D.J. and I, the extra toys would have gone to charity.

Jesse – Jan. 27 – Emergencies, and explaining them to Michelle:

We'd discussed emergencies, and 911, a lot after Steph broke her nose. The girls never called, but if Danny hadn't been home, D.J. might have considered it when the kid she babysat caught his hand in something when he was supposed to be in bed.[234]

A child of three has no clue what they're doing; that's why you still gotta watch. Michelle never called 911. But, that's the kind of thing she'd have done all the time at 2 and 3 if she hadn't been taught to listen. And, she never did any of that.

However, she did ask a lot of questions. For instance, after we'd talked about it a few different times over the last couple days, today she asked if we should call 911

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[233] Her birthday in "Crushed" is Friday the year of that episode, 1992. An episode airs within a week before or after a birthday if it's not the same day and other stuff doesn't conflict. The 17th is best taking every season into account. "Mr. Egghead" starts on a weekday, school pictures are next week. Her party could be the 17th, or that Friday or weekend before school pictures are taken.

[234] "Misadventures in Babysitting," Brian couldn't realistically have gotten his head caught, this was another joke by your "TV pen pal," with the real story a hand caught in a sink or something.

because her favorite color crayon broke. She and I had one of our famous talks about what 911 is for, plus when to call.

We all practiced to make sure Michelle knew what a real emergency was. D.J. warned Michelle if she called when it wasn't a real emergency she'd get really loud, send her to her room and remove dessert for a long while, but even that wasn't as helpful as the huge amounts of praise and practice to make sure she understood.

She never called 911, and neither did the others.[235]

3-17 13 Candles Feb. 9, 1990

Danny - Thu., Feb. 15:

Michelle splashed finger paints all over D.J. and Steph's walls.[236] She always played there once they left for school.[237] It was one of the rare days Jesse told on her. She forgot those few times once I started punishing.

Anyway, I raised my voice about a decibel louder than usual, but didn't punish her. First, I was bothered by how sad she'd been when she let the bird go and nobody even punished her; she felt terrible. Second, I'd read about this great compound, and was cleaning the walls when D.J. got home.

Michelle confessed contritely to D.J., which made me feel good. I told D.J. in my rambling style what she did, too. D.J. punished her, and I left some for Michelle to clean, as much as a child of three could do well. D.J. tried to think of a better way, for later, to discipline Michelle, involving chores she could do.

D.J. – On chores as punishment, and Michelle's attitude:

I had plans for controlling her behavior. I made a list of my chores, and what could do; at this age I could only have her do little things, of course. I'd give her a chore or remove a privilege if she was naughty. They could be for Steph, too. I never punished Steph, but I was ready with those if Dad did nothing a couple times.

Dad wasn't too sure, but once I convinced him I would never give someone my own chores selfishly - something he promised to make sure I didn't do - he accepted it. And, I never did, I even followed Joey's idea for making it more fun for her. I wouldn't make her do chores after she lost a dare, but she'd sometimes joke about it.[238]

Joey:

I loved to entertain. I'd tell D.J. if Michelle needed a timeout, but I preferred to

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[235] Book, "Doubles Or Nothing" – age given is way off, by six even TV Michelle would never call for that. The book "The Baby-Sitting Boss" says she'd never called 911, so it's clearly not book universe. Steph would exaggerate to make a point about unimportant calls, though. Plus, she could easily forget Michelle didn't call, or she meant 6.5 years ago; she'd have only heard it mentioned years earlier. Gia replaces Allie. Saying it's TV canon lets Mickey be shown as a friend. One could argue it's not canon since D.J. is said to have just gotten her own phone line, but as you'll see in the part under what books are canon, incidental stuff like that or being off on ages is easily ignored, as whether it was just obtained or not does not affect the plot in any way, and it's not an "out of character" violation.

[236] "Designing Mothers," Michelle splashed "these walls" with finger paints and Danny didn't like it. There was no problem with coloring walls otherwise by the time she roomed with Steph, so it was here.

[237] "Mr. Egghead"

[238] "Up On the Roof" – D.J. "tricks" Michelle into one of her chores when Michelle tries to get out of sharing it, but all other dares are Michelle's, and D.J. implies that Michelle always makes the challenges. D.J. never makes her do one of those chores.

make listening fun at home. I thought D.J. could make Michelle mind more if she could try and trick D.J. into her chores; I knew she wouldn't win a dare for years.

Michelle grew accustomed to D.J. making her do things like raking up leaves she kicked over, which really helped later.[239]

Becky:

I knew Michelle might become too much of a manipulator if she thought trickery was a major part of getting along with people. She already made the guys melt with her puppy-dog look. Even reacting, D.J. needed to be more than a trickster.

Chores and privileges were a big part of how D.J. disciplined, but Michelle didn't have to do them right away if she lost a dare.

Dr. Landress confirmed D.J. was doing well at her checkup. He emphasized how Danny had to start soon to discipline, but tattling that time was as close as he got. After a few times that stopped; by late summer she'd learned to manipulate the guys, anyway.

Jackson:

Aunt Michelle didn't remember this stage as much as age six by the time she told us how our mom replaced Pam some. "Talk it out, work it out, and hug it out" is Mom's motto. I see why Mom's like Grandpa Danny at times. It's a good thing she had Aunt Becky to help her, though. She needed a plan. I fly by the seat of my pants at times, and that never would have worked with the structure and boundaries a three-year-old needs. Things happened different in different universes, but she turned out great ine ach..

3-19 Those Better Not be the Days Feb. 23, 1990

Danny – On the girls' politeness:

The girls had times when they forgot to say "thank you," of course; most people do. My plan to show them how it felt not to be polite worked well. They often said "thank you" after that, maybe 80% of the time. Even that got better later. The key is, they had thankful attitudes, even if they didn't say it right away. I'll admit, we didn't always model it, which is a key, and probably why they didn't as much as they could.

I think, too, that the older ones focused more on getting Michelle to address us politely; that's why she didn't always say "please" and "thank you" like she had at age two, though she did sometimes. That, too, would have been a lot better with a proactive D.J., as the bad habits wouldn't have begun for them to try and eliminate.

Joey – Feb. 24 - D.J. babysits Aaron, similar house to Brian's:[240]

D.J. babysat Aaron for the first time. She told Kimmy she'd have to make him smell her feet if she went. It was here we learned Kimmy had another "talent" – very bad singing. D.J. didn't babysit him too often; he was far wilder than Brian could ever be.

3-20 Honey, I Broke the House Thurs., Mar. 1, 1990

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[239] "Crimes and Michelle's Misdemeanor" – she'd never obey D.J. so readily if D.J. never disciplined, as there would not be the concept of obeying an authority figure, and would have been much more out of control far earlier, and she's pretty good in seasons 2 and 3.

[240] His home in "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" is like Brian's, but they're clearly not related, just done by the same designer. In some areas, it's not uncommon for numerous houses to look the same.

Stephanie - Mar. 1 – Steph's plans & such after the car in the kitchen:

I had a lot more chores after I backed Joey's car into the kitchen. There was a lot of cleaning up to do; plus I was grounded for a month, having to stay in the house or yard except to go to school; part of that was for running away. I couldn't watch TV for two weeks. I don't remember when I started getting an allowance again.

I'd planned to go to Mexico, but it was too far to walk by myself. I was going to go to Allie's to see if they'd go with me. They were lived in Becky's area.

People run from God the same way, not knowing they're forgiven. They don't understand He wants to show them mercy and forgive them for their sins. All they have to do is repent, that means agree with God about their sins, and trust His death on the cross and resurrection to save them. I learned He forgave me, though, just like Dad and the others, though I didn't think I deserved it. I trusted Christ as my Savior and received His forgiveness this Easter.

D.J.:

We hadn't been to church in weeks, maybe not since Christmas. Stephanie wondered how any of us could ever love or forgive her, let alone God doing it. I recalled enough about grace and mercy to explain it that evening. I told her God's love was like Dad's unconditional love. She'd always be part of the family once she trusted Jesus to forgive her for her sins. And yet, she'd had to come home to receive that forgiveness.

It's possible she didn't understand till she trusted Him to forgive her after Michelle's accident. What's important is she received His love and forgiveness by accepting Him as her Savior. It only takes once, but God won't mind if you do it again because you aren't sure you understood. He wants you know - years later I learned a great verse, 1 John 5:13. The key word is "know" - He wants us to be certain.

Joey – The Neighborhood, and Walking Comet:

In all the excitement, I forgot till later that one of our high school classmates was in the neighborhood, helping his elderly grandparents.

Our neighborhood was a nice one, with an auto place that let me take the dog and tether him just inside while I bought a little thing of touch-up paint; that's where I met our old classmate. We had a variety of small business about a dozen blocks away along a comewhat large street. It was a couple blocks from our house, yet in the other three directions, it was residential and quite peaceful.[241]

Golden Retrievers need lots of walks. We often walked him further, closer to an hour. The girls usually just took him around a block or two, though D.J. would take him to the park a few blocks away.[242] They were getting so close. He'd sit with the younger girls in timeout like Dennis the Menace's dog, Ruff. It was so cute. A few times, Danny let one out and while he was up there, got Comet for his walk.

Becky – Fri. Mar. 2 – Interview with Bo McIntyre:

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[241] This matches "Comet's Excellent Adventure," (fairly busy street near where Michelle walks him) and the rest of TV and books, as a suburb is implied, as noted elsewhere. The "downtown" where Michelle and friends ride bikes to ("Dear Michelle: How Will Santa Find Me") may refer to this or another small area, but a dog would not be walked into a busy, large city downtown and taken in a store. Rather, it would be a smaller town/suburb near San Francisco.

[242] The park is mentioned in the book "A Dog's Life" and elsewhere as being just a few blocks away.

Our guest – who I'd mentioned yesterday would be on today's show – was very interesting. Danny recalled the football part from when he was a sportscaster, in the late 1970s, and had been the one to talk to him and get him on our show. That's why he didn't attend the business dinner, too. I was getting up to speed on what all he did.

Jesse didn't worry after that afternoon. I couldn't have fallen for Bo McIntyre, anyway; he was so busy I didn't see how he found time for anything. However, things had slowed enough that he was starting to look after graduating. He worked at Stanford Medical School's hospital in Palo Alto, and lived near there.

He was actually still in residency, but they call you "doctor" once you graduate medical school. He still had a couple years, but he'd been named the top resident the year before, so he looked ready to embark on a great medical career.

That's the part I was most interested in, but he'd gained fame as a quarterback for one of the nation's top programs, too. He didn't have the skills to make it far in the pros, and an injury his senior season kept him from even trying.[243]

Jesse – Political Stuff More Moderate Later:

McIntyre led a national title team in college before getting into Stanford, one of the top medical schools. He was known for on field smarts and team leadership, not his stats. I guess that makes sense if he was going to be a brain surgeon.

Eventually, McIntyre went into politics. He was a moderate, but he saw things in our state he didn't like, from what he said on the show. He sensed leaders were reacting to the most vocal people without thinking, and were becoming too liberal. He was into state politics by 2000, and by the middle of that decade, he was a powerful and popular leader who kept the most drastic things from passing.[244]

Stephanie - Mar. 26 – On Harry and Walter leaving:

I couldn't believe how long it took to remodel the kitchen. Of course, Dad said it could have been done in a shorter time; we'd done Joey's room, after all, even hiding the water heater behind some of his stuff in a clever way so nobody noticed.

I didn't notice boys much at this age. What girl does? Well, maybe Kathy Santoni

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[243] He was surely a star quarterback, else why mention that? McIntyre would not have had time to be a top NFL quarterback and a neurosurgeon by 30 – likely correct, as Danny would know the name from his sportscasting days. College is very likely; the QB for Ohio State's 2002 national title team was very similar (molecular genetics major), except he tried pro ball. If McIntyre's 30, he could turn 31 soon, so he was class of '81 or '82; '80 is possible if he skipped a year of elementary school.

Where he played: USC is best, if Paul McDonald isn't there, or he replaces him because of injury. All 3 classes ('80-'82) let him make USC's only loss in 1978 a win – even if as a freshman. He can start a year or two later. Alabama is second and viable all three years, Penn State only for Class of '80, (Todd Blackledge, a first round NFL pick, started later.) All three let him win a title and more acclaim without having enough talent to be a pro despite the injury, or having to replace great stories (Clemson '81, Georgia '80.) Georgia is fourth; the record setting high school QB went into pro baseball and could do only baseball in college; there's just no clear point of departure for it. Michigan is 5, Ohio State 6 (if Art Schlichter's woes start early). It isn't as likely they could overcome how far down they are, but history wouldn't be affected by him being there then as much.

USC is also best for him politically since it means he's likely home grown.

[244] Fan consensus was the Tanners would object to discrimination, but also to laws discriminating against traditional families and laws against use of terms like "Mom" and "Dad." And yet, fans also felt a move to Nebraska by 2008, which was considered for this Chronology, was too drastic, when someone like McIntyre existed who would be very popular and likely to have people listen to him.

did. Anyway, this spring my male friends' family each moved, Walter to Boston, Harry to New York. It would seem really strange to not have them around, but I had Allie.

Danny – Stephanie's Honeybee Friends:

Steph had Honeybee friends, too, like Lisa. Lisa and her mom hosted her mother-daughter slumber party; her house was on our block. But, Lisa attended a private school and Steph only saw her at Honeybee meetings. Still, they remained friends even after the Honeybees; Steph's problem later was that she needed a close friend at her school. Her friends in the Honeybees tended to be of the more casual variety, too, though she kept in touch with them quite a bit, and would eventually have several as pen pals.

3-21 Just Say No Way Mar. 29-30, 1990

D.J. - Mar. 31:

Uncle Jesse explained how Mom had jumped to conclusions on a few things he'd almost done. Mom had been right more often than not about him. He was lucky he hadn't gotten a girl pregnant in high school, for one.

Kevin apologized for splashing beer on me. I was glad, but I never really looked the same way at him again. I said I'd talk to him Monday at first, but decided after some thinking that I didn't want a boyfriend who would follow friends toward destructive behavior. I probably could have given him one more chance, but something about drinking made me never want to be seen with him again. Underage drinking is really dangerous. I made sure he understood what had happened to Mom, too.

I never heard of his drinking again. His parents put a stop to it. Maybe my not giving him another chance woke him up, too. After all, he'd liked me. I doubt it would have lasted, though. Too many of my boyfriends were just guys I liked to hang out with then. My time with Ryan, for instance, flickered and died after only a month or so at the end of eighth grade. I wish I'd spent that time really getting to know them personally, talking about deeper things. Maybe that's just part of learning about relationships.

Jesse – Kimmy, Boys, and Teen Safety:

I knew Kimmy wouldn't start drinking, but D.J. had to watch out for her quite a bit. As boys got more mature, and Kimmy seemed to get more immature, D.J. would have to do a lot to keep her out of trouble. One of those kids, Jake Bitterman, acted like they were in love because he thought she was so dumb he could convince her of that.

D.J. had to steer her away from such boys. Jake wasn't like that later, he matured in high school, but they were very selective about parties. D.J., Kimmy, and their friends avoided any situation where a boy might slip something into a drink and take advantage of a girl. This wasn't just for her sake, but it's smart for anyone.

Stephanie - Fri., Apr. 5 – Brian's behavior:

My friend Brian could be a bit wild. D.J. knew that well from watching him. Not a Calvin from Calvin and Hobbes, but a Dennis the Menace from his wilder early years.

For instance, at the dairy farm, Uncle Jesse wasn't watching him closely, and the teacher was distracted. So, Brian tried to get on a cow and ride it. Thankfully, there's a difference between bulls and cows. The female ones still can kick really hard, but she shrugged him off and moved far away from him. Brian also nearly upset a big container

of milk on me. I'd gone beyond "how rude" with my lecture after that - my look and tone got him to shape up fast. I guess he remembered from when I'd corrected him about teasing Walter when the group came over to our house early that fall.

Becky - Why Brian's parents look the same as Tony's:

As they played kickball today, he told Stephanie his parents were taking care of his cousin, Tony. They weren't doing this when D.J. babysat him. But, starting last month, Britan's parents moved from the place they'd rented when D.J. watched Brian, and moved into the house they bought, across the street from us.

Steph told me that Brian said this wasn't the first time they'd watched Tony since he was born.[245] His parents were nice, but Brian had no bedtime,[246] and they wore weird stuff picking him up from school, though they kept other rules consistently.

They were like foster parents, so Dad and the others called them Tony's parents. Brian didn't know what would happen. I was concerned, but I figured Tony's parents were just sick or something. I was really bothered by the fact that it wasn't even a relative who had custody of Charles that time.[247] Tony's situation was never as bad as Charles', though, since Charles had no other family in the area.

D.J. - Apr. 14 – Handling Stephanie and Michelle:

Steph had told me about the Kagans. Dad and the guys watched Tony while Brian was at a friend's this weekend. His parents helped Mr. Kagan's brother and sister-in-law by watching Tony, but had to go away. I didn't totally understand; I saw why Michelle couldn't. She handled Tony being here as well as any three-year-old, though. She would never hit or poke a baby or anything mean. Michelle was always very gentle and timid.

I couldn't think about hurting someone, either, but I would tickle Stephanie like mad if she snooped. When I tricked her once when she was listening in on a conversation between Kimmy and I, she got nervous when I cornered her.[248]

With Michelle, I had to be a lot more concrete than saying something will happen and not what, like when I tied Steph's shoes together. Still, it was easy for Steph and I to always to get her to do things.[249] We just had to warn her with something concrete that I'd enforce. I didn't need to worry about that yet, but I would.

3-22 Three Men and Another Baby Apr. 13-4, 1990

Stephanie – Sun., Apr. 21 – Birds, Bees, Litters, and "Fixing"

D.J. and I came home from some sister time at the mall with Dad. Michelle was upstairs taking a nap. We heard an interesting conversation.

Uncle Jesse and Joey were going over ads for that week. We walked in on them in the living room, and put down our bags, as Uncle Jesse said, "Now that I got everything set up, I learn it's possible but not recommended." He scoffed a bit. "Ah, so what, we can

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[245] "Three Men and Another Baby," Tony's parents are the same as Brian's, and the girls know Tony without being introduced, though Tony wasn't there when D.J. watched Brian.

[246] "Misadventures in Babysitting," they were going to a "Grateful Dead" concert, and likely wore such shirts other places, but D.J. watched only Brian that night, so Tony came later

[247] "Silence Is Not Golden." It's also probable - knowing Danny - Steph never learned the real reason behind Brian's parents watching Tony, either, nor how often this happened.

[248] "Girls Will Be Boys"

[249] "Take My Sister, Please," D.J. says they were always able to get Michelle to do things

make money on a litter, and then get Comet spayed or neutered in a couple months." Joey started laughing. "What's so funny?"

"You don't know the difference, do you?"

"Of course I do; one's for male pets, one's for female. Anyway, we- hey, how was the mall?" Jesse asked, seeing us and changing the subject.

"What's spaying or neutering?" I asked innocently.

Joey tried to rescue him. "Remember, that's what Bob Barker always says to do at the end of 'The Price is Right.'" Dad entered, following us, as Uncle Jesse agreed.

I protested. "Come on, Uncle Jesse, I can tell you're hiding something."

"Face it, guys," D.J. said matter-of-factly, "Steph's mature enough to hear more than that as an answer. She's heard a few little things about making babies."

"Well, that's your dad's job, he'll tell you about that," Uncle Jesse asserted.

"The way he's starting to sweat? I'm not sure," Joey responded.

"Well…I guess, since your mom isn't here…" Dad sat down, held me in his lap, and said, "You know, the natural process is really complex. Comet would get neutered, because…well…Are you sure you want to hear this, honey?"

"Maybe I'll call Bob Barker and ask him what he means," I offered.

"You don't have to do that. Look, let's set a time to talk more a couple years from now, and we'll go over it." Jesse and Joey said Dad had to do it now, before I learned stuff on the street. "Okay. Well…you know who would be great at this?" He got up and said, "Becky. Becky would be great at this. Because…" He could feel our looks. "Well, she's a woman, and women are built differently than men."

"Steph, Comet's mature enough to make puppies now," D.J. explained calmly. "Bob Barker says that because if a dog or a cat isn't spayed or neutered, they can't control themselves like people. They might make puppies or kittens nobody wants."

"Yeah, and your Dad figures it's a good time to share more with you about how that happens; except he's getting nervous thinking about it," Joey said.

"Is it real scary or something?" I asked, a tad anxious.

D.J. assured me it wasn't. "No, Dad just gets nervous. When he and Mom talked with me, he'd always get like this. Mom had to push him to stay in the room once. Comet will be fine. If you want, Dad, we can talk about it with Steph. I'll call Becky for you; we discuss girl stuff anyway. I'm sure she'd help."

We did talk that evening, the first of numerous talks about that. It's a good thing D.J. got the ball rolling and called Becky. Dad got hung up on scientific classifications when he tried to mention "the birds and the bees."

Danny – Breeding Comet:

Golden Retriever males can breed at 6 months, though it should be when they're a bit older. Minnie had been bred, and Comet was a purebred, so when Jesse and Joey got an ad client who was a reputable breeder – not a "puppy mill" – Jesse had talked with them about it but hadn't mentioned how old Comet was.

I'd wanted to do it earlier, but I learned spaying and neutering doesn't calm ddogs down as far as their temperament – that's just maturity. It's what happens when they can't breed but want to where trouble starts if you don't. We eventually agreed we'd breed him once, then do it.

Joey:

Goldens can have a littler of 8-12 puppies. They make super pets. The idea led D.J. to investigate veterinary work, among other interests.[250] Comet was so good-natured, we would follow the line and get new ones from it. We got him neutered that June, after he'd sired a litter of nine; we didn't want unwanted puppies around.

3-23 Fraternity Reunion	Apr. 27, 1990
3-24 Our Very First Telethon	May 4, 1990

Becky - May 4 – Why no more telethons shown; Steph's dance number:

Telethons are fun; we'd end up doing half a dozen others. But, to be honest, the others weren't very interesting. For one thing, we planned things so Danny wouldn't fall asleep; he'd stayed up all night getting things ready the night before this one, too. Also, things just didn't get as crazy as they had with our first one. How often will you see an elementary school kid dancing as part of the entertainment?

As a side note, she almost missed her recital that year because of being grounded, and at first Danny hadn't liked one song, anyway – Jesse had helped pick it out. He said it was great to dance to, while Danny only thought about what it implied. Steph listened to some words; she knew them to sing with the Beach Boys. Still, that was only because D.J. also liked them and she wanted to be like D.J..

I think Danny was a little overprotective here, but that's just the way he is. She hadn't paid attention to these words, and hadn't even heard the title right. Still, Danny made sure Jesse was more responsible with suggestions next time, and he was.

The important part was, our concern for family led us to be picked to run this one. We'd done a great job. Thankfully, Tony's real parents were getting lots of help, too.

Danny – Tony's real parents' problem:

Brian Kagan's uncle's drug problem concerned them, but thankfully, he stayed away from drugs for good after some time in a treatment facility starting today. He and his wife lived with the Kagans for a while even after they regained "custody" of Tony.

The court had never taken custody away from his biological parents. It was always a voluntary thing where Brain's dad convinced Tony's parents to let them watch Tony. Brian's parents stopped going to the concerts they attended, as some of that culture had brought Brian's uncle down.

It was tough on Brian's parents, even in our neighborhood, within easy driving distance of downtown San Francisco, yet separate from most problems.[251] Brian was the typical boy who played a little rough, but they didn't want him getting involved in anything worse than annoying sitters. But, there's a rougher scene in big cities that kids shouldn't be exposed to; I wouldn't have let the kids roam near as much in the city itself. They soon moved to San Diego, where the dad found work.

Tony's parents finally began caring for him for good this Thanksgiving. Brian's

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[250] D.J. has many interests at this age; nursing won over others in polls (fans knew she'd do something in medicine), like Steph and Michelle a small change in NetU causes her to choose vet work. Interestingly, in the "Fuller House" series she mentions originally wanting to be a teacher – one of many interests she likely recalls, perhaps the one she was fondest of other than something medica.

[251] Danny mentions "the city" but never says they live there; it's called that by residents of the suburbs. See earlier footnotes for more on why it's a suburb, plus distances (57 minutes to Aunt Ida's and the airport, which isn't in San Francisco) in "Come Fly With Me." The whole area is diverse.

parents no longer needed to worry about adopting him.

Stephanie – May 7 – D.J. Got A Zit: [252]

When Michelle and I hung out together, one of fun thing was for me to read her D.J.'s diary. We loved reading to her, though I loved the diary part a bit more. Michelle liked the stories about what it was like for D.J. when younger, though those with Uncle Jesse were really fun. I cautioned her that D.J. would be mad if she did any of that stuff, but she figured Dad might be, too, though he didn't punish yet.

Today's entry was about a zit D.J. got, which she tried to make look like a beauty mark. The beauty mark was Becky's idea. Becky was a much bigger help with than the guys with things like this. Uncle Jesse still thought putting a bandage over it would solve the problem, Dad said to tell people she'd poked herself with a magic marker, and Joey suggested just telling jokes to make everything forget about it.

It didn't work well, but D.J. got over it fast. Reading with her helped Michelle to read bigger words, though she told D.J. she couldn't read it, or D.J. would get mad.

Jesse - Sat., June 15, 1990 – Steph's Hairdo, Jesse as Godfather:

Stephanie got a new hairdo for our celebration. Danny insisted all her curls be saved, even though they weren't natural. We settled for a couple in a scrapbook.

Papouli and Gina brought Melina with them. She only asked about her parents once, and didn't cry or seem shy. She ran around acting like all was normal.

My cousin, Dmitri, had financial problems; we only learned why years later. He and Melina lived with Papouli and Gina. For a while Papouli and Gina cared for Melina themselves. So, she felt like they were her folks. It was relatively easy for her to come thousands of miles with only Papouli and Gina.

With them up in years, if something happened to Dmitri, I'd be raising her. After all, that was the only way I'd be able to fulfill a godparent's duties that far away. I'd been too young and wild early. Pam's friend Judy was godmother for the girls. Joey served as godfather for Steph and Michelle, and another friend for D.J.. Dmitri's naming me was more formal, and didn't come right away. He named me once he'd heard about my caring for the girls since the accident, and felt I'd do well with Melina if need be.

4-1 Greek Week June 15-16, 1990

Joey – Jesse as Mother Figure; Engagement Causes Problems:

We'd been told Jesse was Michelle's role model because he was always so sweet and caring. For him to move out – while it wouldn't have been nearly as hard as a divorce on Michelle – would have been a shock to a child who always saw him there.

Danny knew this, and refused to ponder it. Pam would have begun a transition fast. He wanted to protect Michelle from loss, but in reality, he's the one who didn't want to think about loss. So, he never told Michelle.[253] He knew kids need time to get used to things. It required a long transition that should have begun…about now. Okay, really, a

[252] Teaser, "Be True To Your Pre-School," Stephanie's reading to Michelle, and gives the date of May 7. D.J. hadn't had one before this season ("Aftershocks") and it was a rather early entry in that book, so was likely only a few months after Steph was caught reading her diary in "Bye Bye, Birdie".

[253] It's odd Jesse says he told her he was moving in the episode "Fuller House." It's Danny's job, as the dad. Hence he couldn't have told her, otherwise he'd have prepared her and she'd be ready.

few months would have been fine. Jesse probably should have moved into the attic so she'd get used to D.J. getting up with her, helping with her bedtime song, etc.

Becky – Meeting Papouli, Greek "Weddings":

I adored Papouli; I'd heard so much about him. Jesse's so-called wife made me wonder, though I doubt that "wedding" was legal in America. Walking around a table and exchanging farm animals sounds like the 1200s - B.C., no less.

My dad had been wild before he married my mom, though. So, I hoped they'd like each other. As for her, it was hard to tell. They understood why I'd had Jesse wait at home when I visited them in the hospital. It wasn't the right time to be meeting strangers. Still, Jesse's Elvis impersonations had left an odd impression on my siblings.

Danny – June 18 – Advice from Papouli:

Michelle and Melina were cutting inappropriate things with scissors. Papouli happened to hear D.J. scold and send Michelle to her room. Once things were settled down –D.J. letting her out and Papouli letting Melina out from her timeout chair – he suddenly realized that I'd been there, and told D.J. she could have told me.

D.J. explained the situation, hastening to add that Jesse would do a great job with Melina if anything happened to Dmitri. Papouli understood.

He'd raised Larissa himself till she was five, and catered to her whims at times himself. For instance, when she was two she begged him to kiss a goat that was hurt so it would feel better. So, Larissa was accustomed to special treats, like Michelle. Because of that, by Michelle's age, with many things, he could remove privileges from Larissa and it worked well. He said D.J. should try to use this more often.

I told Papouli I'd be ready "soon," so he let it drop. He saw D.J. did a great job, though she was glad for the advice, and she began removing more privileges. It helped when she was busier before I started punishing; loss of dessert or TV for a couple days was a longer reminder, though timeout was still quite important.

Sadly, I still wanted to think of Michelle as a baby, like when Pam was alive. I put D.J. through a lot; she's lucky I never called her "Pam."

Joey - Valentine's/Presidents' Day experiment and Jesse's Wedding:

This year began the three-year experiment with a week off in mid-February.[254] It was mostly for Presidents' Day; they used to give a day off for Washington's birthday, and one for Lincoln's, after all. The girls started school August 23rd, earlier than usual because school ended a week earlier. There would be renovations on a few schools regardless of which redistricting plan passed.

Jesse – Aug. 20 - On His Reunion and Redoing His Room:

I was really excited about the reunion. I'd been too busy with the Rippers to think about my fifth. But, the guys knew where I lived and thankfully, an old band member on

[254] "The House Meets the Mouse." It's a school vacation, not summer. Stephanie wouldn't need to tell Jesse they were out for summer. If it was summer, she wouldn't say "it's a school vacation," she'd say school was out or "it's summer." Also, "The Wedding" - Valentine's Day was Thursday, but Jesse and Becky had to get married then, as their anniversary is on a weekend at Disneyworld; Valentine's Day is a Sunday that year. The very few weekday weddings there are come in the evening, and theirs is 10 AM. Workers could get off, & Becky's family, mostly farmers, could come.

the reunion committee called me today and promised to send me an invitation.

He said I could bring a guest. I worried I'd have to drag Becky along and she'd find out all about my dropping out, so I talked her out of going; I figured if she never had to find out, she wouldn't. I was starting to feel a bit guilty that she didn't know.

That member called as I was finally redoing my room. [255]

4- 3 The I.Q. Man	Fri., Aug. 31-Wed., Sep. 5, 1990
4- 4 Slumber Party	Sep. 7, 1990

Stephanie – Sept. 7 – Growing closer to D.J.:

I'd gotten over my cold by my Honeybee party. Michelle was even over hers. Dad said to wear a jacket, anyway; same with D.J. after just one sneeze. It wasn't that chilly, though; that was just Dad being Dad. I didn't feel cold walking home in my bare feet. Of course, Lisa was only around the corner and a couple houses down.

D.J. and I were growing a lot closer; it was easy to do things like my slumber party. We had lots of fun. As we played, and did some of the things Joey tried, we started to really have a lot of fun. It was a sisterly bonding time, too.

We thought about Mom till we got into the games and such. Then, it wasn't too bad, till D.J. and I stayed awake quite a while talking about Mom, and how we felt, and the others tried to console me. They did a super job. They knew it would be rough – but even Lisa knew Joey wouldn't make a good sub for Becky. She'd been willing to have an aunt of hers sub for our Mom if need be, in fact; she was ready to tell me when I told her not to worry because Becky would be there. It's more fun with your own family, anyway.

It felt a bit strange, though, whereas it wouldn't felt as odd if D.J. had been proactive. Anyway, that closeness helped us work on getting Michelle to behave, too.

4- 9 One Last Kiss	Sept. 15, 1990
4- 5 Good News, Bad News	Sept. 14-17, 1990

Jesse – Sept. 17 – D.J. as Editor, Kimmy's Newspaper Jobs: [256]

D.J. quickly came up with an assignment idea after being named editor.[257] We were all so proud of how she tried to be the best and work with everyone, like Pam would. She and Steph got along well, especially in getting Michelle to listen, considering the strain we put her under as we overlooked things at times.

Her fight with Kimmy on the newspaper was mostly Kimmy's fault, but D.J. could have explained things better if she hadn't had other worries. A lot of her disputes

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[255] Teaser, "Crimes and Michelle's Misdemeanor," must be before school because of school matters in later episodes, but lots of leaves mean this episode must be in mid-October. Teaser can happen anytime before episode if not specifically connected by a scene ("Viva Las Joey") or an activity connected to it ("Silence Is Not Golden") Here, there is no connection with the episode's events.

[256] D.J. is made editor the first day of "Good News, Bad News," & Jesse and Joey have their business, so "The I.Q. Man"'s Career Day must be soon after school starts. D.J. would have surely been named the editor within the first month of the school year. She can have learned about starting a business, but hadn't had homework in it by "The I.Q. Man." Your "pen pal" likely confused "basketball" with football. Almost no schools have basketball games even in early November when the episode aired; California weather is different. Some start as late as early March. Still, it's possible their basketball season starts in September, but a couple books imply a December or January start.

[257] D.J. gave herself an assignment in "One Last Kiss." It seems to be her first, she's anxious to complete it or "give herself a stern lecture." Comet's birthday in this ep. must be in September. He had to be in the house weeks from how he looks in "Divorce Court," which must be in October with Halloween.

with people over little things as a teen came because of worries about Danny's laxness.

D.J.: - Sept. 24 – Precautions, Thinking of Forcing Danny to Punish:

We went back to the corner chair as punishment for Michelle. I'd had less time to work with her, so she needed the corner as a firmer limit. It worked, but she had books memorized that Dad read to her. I wondered why she couldn't memorize rules. She knew I'd be angry at her defiance when I got home. I needed more help.

"Hey, Steph, you know Michelle's birthday?" I said before my shower. Steph was in bed - we always had different bedtimes, the age difference was enough.

"Yeah, what about it, Deej?" She put down a book she was reading.

"We need to sell her on any kind of party except a princess one - including Little Mermaid, since she's a princess." I explained how Michelle might get super bossy and defiant, even if Dad by some miracle started punishing her tomorrow.

"She loves pretending she's a princess, though," Stephanie pointed out.

"Yes, but that actually helps us sell it - it's her birthday, why not have something unique," I suggested. "Now, it's manageable. Even if she does claim princesses can do anything because no princess ever gets punished, we can talk to her."

"Yeah, they don't in fairy tales, and even she only gets punished by you."

"Exactly. When only she calls the shots, she knows she's pretending and can be distracted, or I can stop her. Although, she's starting to realize she can get away with a lot," I said glumly as I sat. "Imagine if all day, everything around her made her think she was royalty and entitled to do anything, regardless of rules."

"Gotcha. Would Sesame Street be okay? She really likes Big Bird."

"Good idea, Steph. I'm thinking about forcing Dad to take charge and punish her. I talked with Mrs. Myer about Michelle today, she said I might have to. It's gone on pretty long; she's not sure how long it'll take before Michelle sees Dad as boss now."

Stephanie spoke a little worriedly. "So, you'll have to keep doing it?"

"Or, at least supporting him for a bit," I lamented. "She also suggested grief counseling for Dad, but I don't think we're going to get him to do that."

Becky – Oct. 13 – D.J. had things in hand, Counselor says to force things:

Michelle could understand a punishment that wasn't immediate but still that day, like "no dessert." D.J. used that and the chair in the corner. Still, D.J. was editor of her school paper, and in Students Against Driving Drunk and the drama club.

Her counselor advised her to force Danny to start punishing Michelle. She did. D.J. told Michelle she'd try to get Danny to punish her. She knew Michelle would boast, then either Danny would punish her, or D.J. would pull the reins back.[258]

Either way, D.J. had control. Michelle got bolder when Danny wouldn't make her stay in bed. With front and back stairs, it was always possible she'd sneak down one. They led to different parts of the upstairs.[259] D.J. put her in the corner, then to bed after

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[258] Jesse doesn't punish, only talks tough, in "Crimes and Michelle's Misdemeanor," "The Long Goodbye," etc., showing he never punished. Again, it's not realistic for her to have been way out of control because, as stated, it would be far worse and seen far earlier, and Michelle obeys D.J. like a good girl when told to rake leaves. Danny then makes her think she doesn't have to obey D.J.. Some say Steph wanted to stop her and D.J. said to let Danny see the problem, but any help she got would advise D.J. of the same thing, and she could have thought it anyway.

[259] They don't appear to on the set, but that's a limitation of filming, the "real" house has them at opposite

her punishment. Once everyone was asleep, Danny came down to put her back to bed.

Stephanie - Sun. Oct. 14 – Why called her "first punishment"?:

Dad finally punished Michelle. I was worried he wouldn't, and wanted D.J. to stop her, but he did. He sold it as a "first punishment" because the time had jumped to five minutes, a 67% increase. So, it seemed longer. The main thing was, it was the first time he'd done it; he hadn't wanted D.J. to call hers that.

Dad used the corner till she got used to his limits. We waited upstairs, in case he struggled. Michelle tried to get out of timeout once. D.J. came in and insisted that Dad was in charge and she had to stay. She obeyed and stayed there.

Danny – Michelle was obeying D.J., Raked leaves as ordered: [260]

D.J. told her to rake up the leaves she'd kicked over. Michelle did it right away, without complaining. We talked after her punishment about why I said they shouldn't make her do their punishment. Michelle understood.

She didn't disobey till bedtime.[261] She kept getting up, so, it was back to the corner for her and some animals she said were up. She obeyed perfectly after that. I knew she'd pick a warm, cozy bed and sweet dreams over a cold corner and a boring wall.

Still, I should have let her rake the leaves like D.J. ordered, to reinforce that D.J.'s rules were right. I hadn't blamed D.J. for not making Michelle go to bed last night; I wanted to start being the one in charge of enforcing those limits. But, I hadn't.

Kimmy – Not Helping Matters with pool:

Ever wonder how Michelle filled her pool, and all that? I helped. See, I came in looking for D.J. as Michelle was bringing the hose into the kitchen. I asked her if she was allowed to do that, and she said "yes." Who was I to judge?

Joey saw me, before she got caught. He got me to do a Liver Council ad. I was confused - I thought it was the body organ. You know, the one that makes you live?

Later, D.J. explained why she hadn't stopped me. She'd said Michelle did it all to emphasize how Michelle thought she could do anything. D.J. finished by explaining to me that the next time a kid said to help fill a pool in the kitchen and blow up water wings, I shouldn't do it. She had a point. It did seem more like something my family would do.

Dr. Landress – Michelle learning slowly because of Danny waiting:

It wouldn't dawn on Michelle for a bit that Mr. Tanner punished for each wrong thing. One bad thing didn't start it all like she thought. He didn't realize how hard it would be. When she wouldn't go to bed, he had to remind her D.J. could make her sit. Then, she sat there. Afterward, she said the lesson was not to swim in the kitchen. She

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ends, just as it would be different from the house shown in the opening. The vast majority of episodes agree with the "staircases to different spots" argument.

[260] Leaves prove the episode is in mid-October, given San Francisco weather. Cool weather is only likely then; September is one of their warmest months. Steph's cold best accounts for her jacket in "Slumber Party," since she wasn't chilly after walking back in her bare feet.

[261] Hence she's in her nightgown and it's bedtime, but the previous scene is midday. No child would be in the corner for hours, so that's not plausible or possible. As explained shortly, Michelle's comment at the end still makes lots of sense given how she developed.

said he was the boss, but that's probably because D.J. told her.

Mr. Tanner didn't include D.J. in who he said she had to obey, because he wanted to be the boss to her, which he had to do, along with the other adults.

Joey hadn't helped. If he'd had to, he could have done a good job. He used the excuse that Mr. Tanner should enforce limits. He was right. But, he had to help. He just melted too fast, like that previous night, and played too much.

D.J. did the right thing, as her counselor advised, making their dad punish. She'd still have to react, but now, she could concentrate on fun, sisterly things like at the telethon, [262] so Michelle saw more easily D.J. only corrected her because she loved her.

D.J. - Danny still a bit lax; If he had struggled that day:[263]

Dad wasn't totally consistent yet; she still tested, but not much, so I relaxed since she was listening. I did insist she had to stay, but that was just to reinforce that she had to listen to Daddy. She was still at the point my loud lecture would have been plenty.

I barely had to advise him on timing her out for getting out of bed, and she obeyed very well; her getting out of bed was never a huge problem again.

I'd have jumped in quickly if she'd refused to stay in the corner for Dad. But, it hadn't been a major crisis point. If it had, we'd have had big problems way earlier, as Dr. Landress said, and then someone – probably I – would have stepped in earlier.

After that? If it had been hours till he got her to stay without my help, my "tale of two princesses" may have come after the samples, with my later threat soon after that, but as long as she knew I'd do it she wouldn't have tested after the threat.

4- 6 A Pinch for a Pinch Fri., Oct. 26, 1990

Danny – D.J. Dealing with Kimmy; No hockey in the house anymore:

D.J. had made Kimmy gossip columnist, but Kimmy asked to copy horoscopes last week. D.J. could have put her foot down; she needed to emphasize commitment. But, she just threw up her hands and said "Okay," not wanting to fight again.

Kimmy frustrated her, but she wasn't alone. She learned a lot about working with difficult situations because of dealing with Kimmy in a business setting like this.

Michelle adjusted well to the new rules. Joey said he was bad to play hockey in the house since I wasn't home – and gave up dessert that night – when she started to do something else she shouldn't. Jesse and Joey each had a long talk with her. It didn't lead to much misbehavior, but it made Joey focus on making sure being good was fun. My inconsistency was the real problem. If not for that things would have been okay.

D.J. – Sat., Oct. 27 – D.J. & Kimmy Hitchhiking: [264]

I needed a major stress release, after Kimmy's actions on the school paper, the ordeal with Michelle, and everything else. So, Kimmy and I had a plan.

We ended up doing the dumbest thing imaginable. I hope nobody out there ever tries what we did. Even though I set very firm limits as to who we would go with before we began hitchhiking to Berkeley, it was still really dangerous.

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[262] "Our Very First Teletohn," D.J. did the song often with Michelle

[263] A fair minority felt Danny had trouble getting her to listen at first, though she could never have been totally out of control, so what would have happened is noted here.

[264] "Stephanie's Wild Ride"

Kimmy wanted to do it Halloween night, till I finally got through to her that that was a school night, we wouldn‘t be allowed to have a sleepover, and we‘d look more suspicious the next day if we did it then, because we‘d have hardly slept. There was trick-or-treating Saturday, though, so we went that “official Halloween” night.

We used the same story each ride. We said we were seniors, seventeen, and our car had broken down. I’d told Kimmy some might be less inclined to take advantage of us if they figured we were under eighteen, though it wasn‘t a guarantee. I had my karate, though thankfully I didn‘t need it. I‘d earned a black belt the summer before seventh grade, and while I didn‘t keep it up I still recalled lots of things from it.

Kimmy’s lack of brain power was worse than trying to say we were dwarves. She tried to make us out to be sisters named Penelope and Gwendolyn once, while calling me “Deej.” I hastily explained I wanted to be a deejay. When the driver asked what kind of music, we said two different types. As if that wasn’t enough, Kimmy mixed up artists’ names and names of songs. Paul Simon as a Beatle was an okay guess, but honestly, “How Much Is That Hound Dog in the Window” is not an Elvis song.

At least that person believed we were joking to hide our real identities. It was a lot harder in another car, when Kimmy related how Isaac Newton invented the fig Newton, and then he founded Apple computers after one fell on his head.

In one car, the driver was a pharmacist. Kimmy blurted that she wanted to be one, too, and asked what kind of farm the driver owned. Then, she announced plans to grow jelly beans. That pretty much ended that ride before it even started.

At least she provided me with great comic relief. And, all things considered, it was better to have her along so I didn’t think of how scared I was.

We ended up back at Kimmy’s and snuck into her place with her key; it was much less strange than if we’d tried our house. She simply explained that Stephanie snored too loudly. Nobody suspected a thing. I embellished later for Stephanie, talking about being out all night, because I wanted her to feel better after her joyride with Gia.

Would I do it again? Certainly not. It’s far more fun staying up all night in your own home with friends. Having a friend like Kimmy is rough, though, and shows why you have to have boundaries and help those like her understand and follow rules. What we did was dumb. What she’d wanted to do…let’s say she’s lucky I talked her out of it.

Kimmy:

D.J. stopped me from doing some really dumb things over the years. I wanted to be her, but a weirder her. Here, for instance, she didn’t let me hitchhike disguised as a werewolf, and we didn’t sneak into someplace like her Uncle Jesse had the Smash Club, shouting that we‘d seen Elvis. And, she wouldn‘t allow me to use my socks as stink bombs. She would only go so far. It annoyed me a little, but now I know she was really looking out for me. I’m really thankful to have her as a friend.

4- 7 Viva Las Joey Nov. 1-2, 1990

Danny - Sat., Nov. 3, 1990 – Joey and His Dad Reconciling:

It was wonderful to see Joey and his dad reconcile after all these years in Vegas. Sadly, Joey’s dad died a while later. They didn‘t get to talk except on the phone a few times, as it was still hard, and his dad felt ashamed. He’d seen Joey perform, though, and Joey got to hear him say how proud he was, that was the important thing.

We couldn't get enough tickets, so Becky babysat Michelle. Jesse's parents left the Beach Boys' concert early with Michelle; Becky was home for Thanksgiving. With both, it would have been way too late for Michelle to be up. Besides, we had videos.

4- 8 Shape Up Nov. 5-10, 1990

Joey – Mon, Nov. 5 – The Samples, and D.J. Punishing:

When Michelle crawled on the table and gobbled up the cake samples just after D.J. left the kitchen, nobody could believe it. She answered and kept eating when Jesse asked which she liked. Steph thought for sure Danny would stop her. However, when he just planned to give her a bath, she had to go get D.J..

"She what?! For how long?" D.J. was shocked and steamed. Steph told her to calm down, as she put a water pop down and charged up to the main bathroom. Michelle was undressed, and we were wiping chocolate off her; it was on her clothes, too.

"Michelle, what did you do to those samples?!" D.J. scolded.

Michelle lowered her head. She knew she'd been very naughty, as with all kids raised normally to obey parental authority. Danny had only been punishing for a few weeks, and he'd been a bit lax, like here. Still, she didn't think D.J. would ever scold her again; now, she wondered if she might. "I'm sorry," she said sadly. She felt the start of a sugar rush, but also knew she'd been very naughty.

D.J. asked what Danny planned to do.

"Well… do you see any bubbles or toys?" Danny asked defensively. He blamed himself for not stopping her. He hated to see her sad; her adorable face and laugh brought memories of Pam. He was torn between which girl he wanted to see as Pam.

"Yeah, give your dad a break, Deej," Jesse said. "She's always got lots of those."

Flailing an arm, D.J. said, "That's not the point. You're not even lecturing. Steph says Michelle wasn't sorry! And, what about crawling on the table?"

Becky overheard, and summoned D.J. into the hall. "Look, I know it upsets you. But, something like this reminds your dad how he wishes your mom were here to run things. Or, he thinks about your Uncle Jesse and I marrying. Just realize when he's like this, he might be hurting. And, he needs your support."

D.J. thought a moment, and realized he probably did feel bad. He hated change. "Maybe you're right," she said finally. "I didn't think adults had crises."

'Some do. I know you figured he was over the worst, and he'd keep her under control. But, you might have to handle some things." She smiled. "What do you say we encourage him to be firmer later? You can deal with her after her bath."

She agreed. Danny said no dessert in addition to no bubbles or toys, but talked easily. Michelle was giggling and playing in the tub, the effects of all the chocolate. She didn't get as wired on sweets as some, but it was a lot for her age.

D.J. gathered her thoughts. She went in with clean clothes. "I'm sorry I got so upset, Dad. Becky said you might have been thinking about Mom."

"I…well, if you'd been at Kimmy's, I'd have called you. For advice, like Dr. Landress said." She promised to always be willing to help him.

D.J.:

I expressed shock at Dad ignoring some things, but focused on correcting the problem. Especially at times like this. I picked my battles with Michelle, and this was one

I had to win. “I’ll take it from here, Dad,” I said.

“Remember what you told me when Steph wrecked the car. Go easy on her; she’s just a kid,” he said softly. He handed her to me in a towel. She was over her sugar rush. He grabbed the clothes she’d smeared chocolate on, and they all left.

I told her I wouldn’t let her get away with things, even if he did. That led her to utter a low, sad, “I thought it would be fun.” She knew from my look it wouldn’t be.

“Daddy blamed himself for letting you do that,” I began as I dried her, “but it was still bad!” I scolded harshly. I reprimanded her sharply, a tear rolling down her cheek. I hated seeing her so sad, but I wanted her to realize how bad it was. I admonished her to listen despite how energized she felt, and to never do that to anything again!

“Are you gonna punish me, too?” she whimpered once I finished.

“Oh, yes! You will sit in the corner as punishment, and look at the wall till I get you. And, no sweets till your birthday next Monday!” She obeyed. She never tried to get out of it. She knew when I meant business, and sensed I was boss. This helped her accept I’d still discipline some. I thought Dad was done ignoring, but he wasn’t.

She let me help dress her. I said she couldn’t choose her clothes since she’d been bad; she didn’t complain. Not listening well in her bath was secondary, but this was a good punishment for that. That small a consequence usually worked quite well with her for little things. She learned her lesson from that and the lecture, too.

Danny – Michelle’s “phase”:[265]

D.J. and she talked and hugged a lot, as D.J. made sure she understood what was expected, and wasn’t scared of D.J. after that lecture; she wasn’t. Michelle knew, deep down, D.J. did it out of love, because she’d corrected her for so long. But, she also had the worst tummyache. As I cuddled her, she moaned, “I hate chocolate cake!”

“Sweetheart…” I didn’t know what to say. She knew it was her fault. I said she could have it when she was a good girl. Soon, she decided she would like it again. Like with all kids this age, she asked and needed a little reminder or two, with the punishment being over a few days, but she obeyed her punishment of no sweets.

Stephanie - Sat., Nov. 10 – Feeling for D.J.:

It didn’t matter what happened between D.J. and I. I always cared about her. I knew it wasn’t normal to not eat anything for three days. D.J. worried about her looks, when she didn’t have to. Because of that experience, I never considered anything like it. It was scary. Dad always worried, anyway; he asked Joey to make D.J.’s favorite food just because that’s how he was if she just didn‘t feel good. It wasn’t huge yet, but a disorder could have developed if she kept refusing to eat.

This incident helped D.J. realize how important it was to be in control herself, and concentrate on the fact she was very special to all of us.

Becky – Nov. 11: Helping D.J. not have to sneak in:

Now that she wasn’t worrying about the bathing suit, D.J. thought about the fact she’d have to sneak into an exclusive motel. She felt bad, and confided in me. I promised to help without telling anyone, since I didn’t live there yet. Good thing, too; Heather Zink’s family couldn’t fly out. D.J. would have had to impersonate a 78-year-old guy

[265] “Girls Will Be Boys,” Danny says she went through a 10 minute phase of not liking chocolate cake

here for his reunion to sneak into the party. The fellow had been booked at a lesser motel but got taken off the Excelsior's waiting list when the others cancelled.

Tuesday afternoon, I called the Excelsior. Being in local media, I got through to management. Some people like to think they'll be interviewed. I helped save Garth's job, too, by asking about parties first, and how one booked them. I said I knew of a plan, with no details, to sneak into the private pool area, and that "a few girls" felt badly about it. I inquired how to get them the party so they didn't have to sneak in.

The owners were thankful I'd told them. We agreed to interview them Friday, before the party, and to have several features on the Excelsior's grand history later. I also arranged for local guests to appear next week instead. I explained all this to Danny Tuesday evening. I suspect that's part of why he was confused over schedules the next day, when he got D.J.'s and Steph's mixed up.

4-12 Danny in Charge Nov. 13-4, 1990

Danny - Tues, Nov. 13 – Danny confusing schedules, etc.:

We'd had the 12th off with Veterans Day Sunday. Next year, kids got two days off, with other scattered days off causing school to end a few days later.

Jesse and Joey left the morning after Michelle's Sesame Street party to film things for their ad agency. I was so proud; I recouped most of my investment in them.

Michelle behaved well when I slept for four hours Wednesday. It was 2 PM when I fell asleep, an hour before D.J.'s play and Steph's science fair. I confused the schedules. I told Michelle we'd see D.J. in act one and Steph during the judging, not the way I'd told the others. I was like that at times, mixing things up.

Anyway, D.J.'s guidance counselor was right; Michelle had more control than a one-year-old. Michelle made a couple sandwiches during this time – and small messes which Comet licked up. She used a spoon to spread stuff. She played in the girls' room, and in hers. We praised her up and down for being so good.

The night of her party, she'd snuck cake upstairs earlier, and ate it after bedtime. Since Joey was gone when we got up, we assumed he ate the missing piece.

D.J. – Thu., Nov. 15 – Dr. Landress says "Michelle Understands":

I wrote questions for Dad to give Dr. Landress at Michelle's checkup. The doctor called me that evening on my line; boy, did I feel grown up!

He said I was normally a sister, like when I read to her and other typical stuff. If I punished her, I was like a mom. It was logical for her to think that way. That she could think of me wearing two hats showed good cognitive development. She knew I loved her no matter what. She'd get used to Dad's rules being ultimate, like any transition in her life, if he stayed consistent. For now, it was fuzzy. If he couldn't control her, it was okay if I did, if she knew he was letting me do it. Like when I babysat.

He said with the samples and later, Michelle probed for a boundary, to see if and when I'd punish. She got sneaky, and could get quite rude and defiant. She made noise – "nyah nyah" and other stuff - and covered her ears to get a reaction when Dad corrected her a couple times. He wordlessly took her to her room and sat her in the corner then, so that stopped. She tried similar stuff, though. Being a princess was her favorite way. She'd learned her line "You got a bad attitude" from me. A Princess-themed party would have encouraged that. We had problems as it was; she was defiant even with this party. She

was timid, but I had to loudly insist she stay a couple times.

Danny – Nov. 16:

Michelle did something naughty right after having been told not to, and D.J. was frustrated. She wanted to nip this in the bud before Michelle got worse.

I didn't want to think about it when D.J. reminded me what Pam mentioned to me once, and that she told D.J. she'd do it if nothing else worked with a kid like Jesse.

I was relieved that D.J. wouldn't spank right away, or give more than light fwaps. She remembered how shocking the idea had seemed, but wanted to avoid running out of privileges and screaming. D.J. wanted to make Michelle think. I sadly admitted what D.J. considered was like what Pam and I had discussed about a kid like Jesse.

Jesse – Why Michelle knew about spanking for being "bad":[266]

Michelle almost never hit, even a doll. She fwapped playfully a bit right after this, though. So, when Wendy's chimp was hitting me, I thought Becky was copying Michelle, as Michelle did it to me or a doll a few times playing "house."

D.J. - Nov. 18 – Using a Story to Teach; "Tale of Two Princesses":

One of Bil Keane's "Family Circus" comic strips later reminded me of Dad. The grandmother said she hadn't lost her husband. She knew where he was. She was the lost one; just like Dad. In a different one, the girl says a spanking hadn't hurt her bottom, just her heart. That's what I'd give if I had no choice.

I called Dr. Landress after talking to Dad; he was stunned, knowing we never believed in it, but understood my worries and how Mom said they'd handle a real rebel. He had parents who did it, and advised the following: Explain what would lead to it and how to avoid it, which I planned, if it came to such a threat; be calm, so it didn't teach aggression; and, be very loving so I'd humble her without humiliating her. He said to mention it as possible only if I could handle it, since Dad would never do it.

I said I could. I'd use no force, raising my hand slightly with my elbow beside me, the amount depending on size and how thick her outfit was. It might pinch a second at worst, I hoped not at all. I only wanted her to recall hurt feelings if I did it.

I wanted to warn Michelle before I had to threaten it, though.

I picked a time before Kimmy's party. Michelle was disobeying but calm; no sugar rush, just defiance. Instead of ordering her into the corner for it, I calmly carried her to her bed and promised a story. The change got her attention. We sat up on her bed with my arm around her. She was in a cute princess outfit and tiara.

I told the tale of two princesses. They were bad princesses who had just turned four. They disobeyed lots of rules and were really rude; I had them doing all the bad things in the story Michelle had done lately. She was drawn into it big time.

Then, I told her both would always be loved, but one princess started to be good. The good princess obeyed, she was polite, and she went to timeout and said she was sorry

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[266] "Too Much Monkey Business" - Wendy's chimp hits him as he naps. He thinks it's Becky being frisky, and asks "Was Uncle Jesse a bad boy?" as if Becky is copying Michelle. If he didn't think Becky coped Michelle, he'd say "was Jesse a bad boy." Michelle's the only one she'd have seen playing like that., and that wouldn't happen unless Michelle was exposed to the concept of spanking for "being bad." It's doubtful she'd copy it from a friend at that age and do it. Most feel it was discussed by D.J., as "Silence Is Not Golden" shows the guys never would.

if she was naughty, but she almost never was naughty. She was still princess, but she accepted that her dad the king and the men raising her had rules that she had to follow. I had the good one act just like I hoped Michelle would.

Michelle was really excited as I praised this good princess. “I want to be just like her. And make everyone happy,” she proclaimed. I could tell she meant it.

I told her I was glad. The bad princess kept being bad, till she was so very bad, she wouldn‘t stay in timeout, and snuck privileges that were taken away as punishment. Finally, I described how “Queen D.J.” ran out of ways to punish, so she gave the bad princess a spanking – several slaps on the bottom with just the hand while over the queen’s knees. “You’d rather be the good princess, huh?” I finished.

She nodded slowly. “Or you’ll do that to me?”

“Only if I have to, but I don’t want to,” I said soothingly. She leaped into my arms, pledging to be good. I said if she didn’t start obeying Daddy like she knew to, we’d have a “very serious talk” about it. I assured her only I would hit her bottom – Dad said none of the adults would ever do it. Because of her pinching, I emphasized it was only okay for the queen to do it, only to punish, and then as an extreme last resort.

As frustrating as it was to tell her that story, I could picture Mom doing the same thing if need be. Grudgingly, Dad could, too. He still thought I‘d overreacted a bit.

Maybe I did, but I was thirteen and trying to discipline a kid. It was tough, but he told Michelle I had permission to do it. She hadn’t asked about my disciplining her for months. I understood, though, it was never mentioned in our family till now.

Danny:

Michelle became very good. We were all so thankful. That night after Kimmy’s party, though, I needed to talk to D.J. alone, after the younger girls went to bed.

“Deej,” I began as we sat on the couch. I struggled with what to say. “Michelle told me about your tale of two princesses…”

“Dad, I promise, I hate to think of even hurting someone’s feelings. You know I could never do anything more than that,” D.J. said sincerely.

“I know. It just hasn’t been done in our families - not even love pats. We’ve always been well behaved. Okay, your Uncle Jesse had problems, so maybe a few times, with all the time in the principal’s office…Look, Mom said if a kid was totally out of control like him maybe love pats would be a thought, but that was right after he rode his motorcycle on a roof when he was twenty. Her saying that was just part of how excited she got. We knew none of you girls would ever need that.”

“I know; that’s why I told the story now, so her rebellion doesn’t get that bad. So she knows there’s a limit to her misbehavior and refusing to listen.”

I sighed; it had been so much easier when Pam was alive. “I know you’d try really hard never to hurt her anywhere but her feelings, but…can you at least promise it would be a true last resort? You’d tell me if you really consider it, so we could sit down as a family and discuss how to help Michelle behave.” She promised. I could tell she meant it, but I was still hesitant. “Deej…this is so tough. I know Dr. Landress said Michelle may still see you as boss a bit, but there’s a relationship that exists, or should exist, between a husband and wife where I would trust Pam. I’d trust her, though neither of us believed in it, to give a few love pats to a kid like your Uncle Jesse.”

“Maybe you could make her pinky swear,” Joey suggested from behind us, where

he'd heard the last part of what I'd said.

"How about it, Dad?" D.J. said, holding up her pinky finger. "I pinky swore the same thing to Steph before she went to bed, anyway."

It sounded weird, but Joey had a point. It made a promise unbreakable to a kid. "Well…okay. Thanks, Joey. It's not the normal way parents handle things. But, I guess it'll have to do." I turned to D.J. and held up my pinky finger. "Pniky swear?" I asked.

"I'd try my best not to hurt her bottom, and only as a last resort, after we've talked so we can help avoid it," D.J. promised. "Pinky swear."

We wrapped our pinkies around each other. Dr. Landress was right – we ran a risk of problems if we weren't careful, with me waiting so long. Hopefully, Michelle would never again need it to be mentioned. However, more importantly, if she did, I would still be working to help her, which was my job.

Jesse:

We praised Michelle constantly for being such a good princess. She knew she could keep being good and not worry. She accepted what D.J. said.

We didn't like to see it done, even to a doll; if we saw it, we dissuaded her. She almost never played like that, just a bit as she grew used to the thought.

None of us would ever do it, so it was really frustrating to have it brought up, let alone that Michelle considered it proper punishment. Michelle even said once if any of us acted like that, it was for fun, like the Stooges. If D.J. did it, it was "because she means it. 'Cause she's the queen." She'd know the difference between that and playful pats or pinches, too; though my mom only ever pinched their cheeks, unlike with me.[267]

One time, she told me, "Only really bad princesses get spanked. I don't 'cause I'm a good princess." I assured her she was. "I do what Daddy says. Then I don't hafta be punished," she finished sadly. She really hated going to her room as punishment, or the corner. She knew what was expected, and that she didn't have to be playing princess for D.J. to mention it. And, it wouldn't be just because D.J. was mad.

She never wanted it to go further, but she wasn't scared. So, it was okay. After another few weeks, in fact, we went back to her room, not the corner, as punishment.

D.J. – Glad She Didn't Have to Get Tougher:

Her behavior improved fast. So, after about a week, the notion got pushed back in her mind. I was glad; I didn't want her worried I'd spank right away. Still, the story stayed. She imagined it to be worse than I'd ever do it. She knew I meant it if I said something would happen, though; I'd been consistent. So, she knew to obey me.

Danny – Nov. 23 – Visiting Pam's grave, and thinking:

I told myself this was the worst, and it was all because I'd waited so long.

We didn't visit Pam's grave, except to place flowers on Mother's Day, so it looked nice. We knew the real Pam was in Heaven, but that abstract concept took time to take root for the younger girls. Okay, it was for me, too; I went a few other times.

This day after Thanksgiving was one. We reminisced, talking about how D.J. made the meal, with a great turkey. She was so proud. So was Steph – though she still

[267] "Working Mothers," his mom pinches his tush and says how cute he is – we don't see her do it to the girls, it's most likely she's the kind to playfully pinch their cheeks, like some doting older ladies do.

liked to have D.J. help her carry the pie. We talked about family, and much more.

"Mommy's in Heaven?" Michelle asked. I said "yes." "So why are we here?"

"Well…it's a tradition since we can't go there, and...Girls, why don't you wait in the car with Uncle Jesse and Joey?" They left. Stephanie excitedly told Michelle how great it was up there. I knew where she was, too, but the pain of losing her was still incredible. Especially with the changes going on.

I looked up, reminding myself she could hear, and thought out loud. "She's adorable, huh? She has your laugh, your pretty face. She's so cute, she repeats things like 'Happy New Year,' not knowing what they mean.[268] I met a nice lady named Cindy. I know we talked about how we could date, but you know how anxious I get. I'm trying to discipline Michelle consistently, though, not letting it distract me.

"I hope what D.J. said about spanking her if need be is what you meant with a kid like Jesse. I think it was. I told her what you said." I sighed. "It really bothered me to see Michelle spanking a doll she said wouldn't stay in timeout. We said we didn't want to see even a doll hurt, so she shouldn't hurt them or people. She agreed and hugged it, saying she loved it, but it had been really bad. Her doctor said she experimented in a safe way; play is how kids learn. It's just the others never played like that. It was unheard of in our home. You know I'd never do it. I know I've messed up. I'm trying to be consistent, so D.J. never has to bring it up again. I'm sorry if I've let you down."

D.J. had returned, and heard me. "It's okay, Dad," she said. We hugged. "I'm sure she understands." Soon the others had come back, and we shared a group hug.

I was grateful. It brought us closer. D.J. understood I could have crises, like Becky had said. A few months later she even asked if I was having one.[269]

4-10 Terror in Tanner Town Sat., Nov. 24, 1990

Jesse - Tues., Nov. 27 – Talk about lying, not a problem anymore:

Michelle and I had another of our talks, after she blamed Cindy's boy, Rusty, for knocking over a lamp, though he wasn't here. She was sent to her room for seven minutes as punishment. That amount worked well for a year. She never lied like that again.

She was old enough to understand a little of what lying was and why it was bad to say someone else did something that you did. She listened very well, and was adamant about not lying later. [270] Still, like most kids of 4, the idea was blurry about things like tricking people, till Steph tricked her months later.

Pretending I'd graduated aggravated me, after that talk. I pushed it aside, but I dreaded having to come clean, though; especially to Becky now.

4-11 Secret Admirer Sat., Dec. 15, 1990

Becky – Dec. 15 – Rusty's Letter:

Rusty caused even more problems today. Relationships wouldn't have ended, it wasn't that bad. We would have sorted things out when we realized everyone had seen the same letter. It was really funny afterward, but the lecture Rusty got was pretty loud.

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[268] "The I.Q. Man"

[269] "The Graduates," he wishes he was 21; plus, she thinks about him in "A Date With Fate," worrying he's out wandering the streets alone.

[270] She didn't lie about who wrote a love letter ("Secret Admirer"). Later, in "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun," she doesn't get the "boy who cried wolf" story, so Steph tricks her, which teaches her the lesson.

He apologized nicely later. He was a handful, but we had a positive influence. It was hard with how often he was grounded at first, but we helped a lot.

Stephanie – Mon., Dec. 17 – Michelle and Sweets, Chocolate Factory:

Michelle got a bit bolder again; before Rusty's letter, she ate all the centers out of the cookies in our cookie jar over a day or so – a few at a time - before any of us caught on. Uncle Jesse talked with her; it wasn't a lot at once, so he wasn't worried. So, he said "it's taken care of" and made it sound like 1-2 cookies, so that was it.

Her boldness was slowed today by my class's field trip to a chocolate factory. Joey was a chaperone. Dad and Becky were working, Uncle Jesse had something with their business, and grandparents were traveling. So, Michelle tagged along. She was good, we watched her closely, but she ate too many free samples. Then again, so did some kids my age; it's easy to get carried away. In fact, Joey ate too many.

This helped slow her down some, but she sped up again after the New Year.

Danny – Tues., Dec. 18 – Double Checking for Joey's Video Date:

We signed Joey up for a video dating service for Christmas, recording him today. I'd checked the company; it was very reputable. We never would have done it if it wasn't a sure thing. They screened all applicants. They insisted on honesty, hence one video had a woman talking about her parole officer. She hadn't been a violent felon.

We gave them all of Joey's information for a background check; his date's friends did the same. Yes, a few women were odd, but you get that in California.

Joey's date, of course, was like him; a nice person whose friends set it up for Christmas. She enjoyed being with the girls over New Years; she had fun with one of her friends and her girl, too. She didn't want her own kids; she preferred a carefree life, but a as Joey joked, 8 seconds into the new year, 1991, it was great.

4-13 Happy New Year	Dec. 31, 1990
4-14 Working Girl	Thu., Jan. 2-Thu., Jan. 16, 1991

Joey – Thu., Jan. 2, 1991 - D.J.'s job, grades; Later preschool time once:

D.J. liked to say she was 14 since she was close, so we humored her.[271]

She'd barely kept an A in science in the last nine weeks, doing more poorly at the end. Still, she learned about a job at the mall, shopping with some Christmas money. She got an application. Danny knew her goal was to be tops in her class, and didn't want her grades to slip. But, after the normal things you do when hiring – shortened timewise since the owner hadn't been looking – Danny let her take it. After an F on a test reviewing the stuff she'd had trouble with, she quit. She never got a job during school. She was a paid counselor at Camp Lakota, but that was to help Michelle as much as anything.

This afternoon, Michelle's preschool had a fair promoting next week's "politeness week." Her preschool was two hours in the morning otherwise.[272] Families were urged to come and learn how to work on it at home; the older girls were on break till Monday. While they didn't go, some kids' siblings did. Michelle played "polite police" till near

[271] Wedding plans mean "Working Girl" can't be after her 14th birthday; it must be six weeks before the wedding. However, some teens do this, and it's in D.J.'s character

[272] Every other episode not only implies, but often states, preschool is 2 hours in the morning. D.J. was at the mall, anyway, so she didn't have school yet; the backpack was likely purchased there.

Steph's birthday; four-year-olds latch onto things like that at times.

Jesse – Thu., Jan. 17 – Steph's birthday, cupcakes, and the wedding ring:

We knew kids had to learn to work things out on their own. Steph did with her cupcake, tickling Michelle and scolding some. That almost always worked. Michelle was wound up thinking of the wedding. And, she was also frustrated that being polite wasn't always going to get her what she wanted; especially with cake.

Today, Michelle got bolder. She grabbed some of Steph's birthday cake – with a spoon – before Steph got any. When she wouldn't settle, she got sent to her room. She was good when she came down from punishment seven minutes later.

The next day, she hid my wedding ring. Joey had a long talk with her about how special wedding stuff was and how bad hiding it was. It helped. He imitated me too well, as he didn't send her to her room. I talked to her about respect today. That helped, but she got bolder, a desire to be good replaced by excitement over the wedding.

Stephanie – Sat., Jan. 19 - Michelle tests limits:

Michelle knew the ring was very special, but hid it anyway. It was a big game to her. She tested because she got away with hiding it and eating the fillings. Dad sent her to her room today for hiding it. Michelle had snuck cookies up to her room, and ate them in timeout. She said she'd done it before; we realized she hid it as Dad unpacked groceries. So, Dad said "no dessert." She was in her room because she was naughty, not to enjoy sweets. D.J. gave her chores for other rudeness, too.

We all discussed how special the wedding would be. That helped. People do things at home they shouldn't in public. They get in bigger trouble if they do. Michelle knew this; almost all her testing was at home.

D.J. added, "I know you won't ruin the wedding cake. You'll be in big, big trouble if you do, though!" Michelle nodded slowly. "We'll go over this more, but if I see any icing from it on your hands, I will yell a lot before Daddy sits you in the corner. If you try to steal a slice before the bride and groom, you won't get dessert for a long time." She finished by saying, "Weddings are very special, so you need to be on your best behavior. You won't get in trouble at all there, not even a timeout, huh?"

Michelle agreed vehemently. She wanted to be where the action was.

"Good. I know you'll listen and be good," D.J. finished cheerfully, focusing on the positive. She didn't think she had to remind her of the princesses.

"I'll be a very good girl!" Michelle said excitedly. She had sneaky ideas left, though, which she used that evening, after we went to bed.

Danny – Struggling with Accepting the Problem:

I loved to indulge all my girls. I'd bake a cake tomorrow for Becky's shower, but I made us one, too. Michelle couldn't have dessert, so she tried sneaky ways to get it. We kept saying "no," adding if she was really good, she could have a piece tomorrow.

She kept thinking about the rest of that cake in the middle of the night. She went and got it out of the container. She couldn't cut a piece, so she got on the kitchen table with the cake and ate with a spoon. She dug into it with her hands, too.

I couldn't help but chuckle at my princess in the kitchen. She'd gotten her fill and

dozed off, and was sleeping soundly. I let her sleep, telling Steph to be quiet as she came down. We knew what she'd done. She had icing on her face, hands, and so on.

Steph was worried, and ran up and brought D.J. down with a towel, reminding her of her promise. "It's okay," D.J. said. "You and Dad made me pinky swear, and I'd never even hurt her feelings right away."

Michelle stirred then, and feigned innocence. "Good morning."

"Michelle, what did we say? You could have that tomorrow," I asked evenly. Part of me thought – okay, wished was a better term – she would confess and be sorry.

Instead, she spoke with a mischievous grin. "It wasn't a wedding cake." It was that grin where the kid is testing, but knows they've done wrong.

"Let me handle it, Dad," D.J. offered. "I know it's rough without Mom."

"Sure." As D.J. took Michelle upstairs, I closed my eyes. Steph gave me a big hug; I returned it. "If your mother and I had a problem, Steph, we always reminded ourselves we'd make it through. We'll do it here, too. I promise. I'll be consistent from now on." Part of me didn't think D.J. had to threaten Michelle yet, but the important thing was that we go forth from here without her having to do it.

I was ready to be consistent, firm, yet fair. I'd be almost perfect for over a year.

D.J. – Sun., Jan. 20 - Tough, Loving Warning:

She went potty while I ran bath water. Before she got undressed, I made her sit on a towel in a chair against the wall for crawling on the table. I told her firmly to stay, took play clothes into the bathroom – she would put on her party dress later - and checked the water. I praised her after timeout for staying, took her into the bathroom, and sternly asked if she recalled my story of the princesses as I wiped off some of the chocolate.

"I don't like the really bad one. She got spanked," Michelle said sadly.

"I'd only spank you if I thought nothing else would get through to your heart. I hope we always get through to your heart without it, by punishing you with timeout or chores or taking privileges," I asserted. "But, we have a problem! You know Daddy said no sweets as punishment! You got up and messed up the rest of that cake that was for everyone. You need punished for that. Plus, you need punished for sneaking sweets when you knew you couldn't have any as punishment!" She looked at me with puppy dog eyes. "If I run of ways to punish, or you keep getting out of punishments, I might have to spank you, and you won't get out of that."

"This tush is just for sitting," Michelle declared somewhat brashly. That told me I was right; she needed to have me threaten it. When my expression didn't change, she said sadly, "But, I got a little tush." I'd figured my size made the idea worse.

"So did the really bad princess. But, she wouldn't control herself or listen. You know what the queen had to do," I said softly. She associated that with herself.

I rubbed her bottom, as a warning and to know how light to be. I wouldn't give warning pats. Those would be close to the fwaps I'd give if I ran out of options. I wanted that to be so unusual she'd remember hurt feelings easier, thought a lecture would also help on the way to her room to do it in private.

Her attitude changed. She looked up with a tear in her eye and asked, "Am I in big trouble?" I said "yes," and she buried her head in my chest, concerned about how it would feel if I spanked her. I wasn't sure what to do afterward, if I ran out of other ways and had to give her light fwaps. I hated the thought, so I hadn't pondered it. Now, I knew

she'd be in my arms fast, or maybe Steph's if I stood her up and she was a bit scared, though I'd quickly hug her and talk. She was timid. Dr. Landress said later she wanted comforting when she did this, but she was probably also showing submission. He knew a few cases of older siblings as disciplinarians.

We cuddled. "I'll only spank you if I have to, but I don't want to," I said lovingly, gazing warmly, glad her heart was tender as expected. "The bad princess's heart hurt, that's what's important. She had to obey rules. She didn't, so her feelings really got hurt." Michelle agreed; the bad princess was heartbroken. "She wouldn't listen any other way, so the queen had to break her heart," I said sadly. Michelle felt bad for her. "Being sent to your room or yelled at or any punishment hurts your feelings, right?"

Michelle agreed sadly. "I don't like being naughty," she mourned, sniffling.

She got no TV for a few days and no sweets today. She'd get a piece of Becky's shower cake tomorrow if she was perfect. She was. During her bath, we discussed what was expected, what could happen, and how neither of us wanted to feel that bad. She also asked about Mom. I said Mom and Dad discussed having a total rebel, and what would have been Mom's job was mine. She blushed and promised to be good.

She seemed little as she dressed, reinforcing how emotional it'd be if I'd "break her heart" with light fwaps. Still, I'd told Dad to go easy on Steph after she wrecked Joey's car to emphasize she felt so bad. Michelle needed firmer limits. I didn't want her to feel awful; just to know her behavior was so bad. It took my tough talk to get through because of Dad's laxness, but thankfully, she listened and obeyed.

We emphasized how she hated any punishment, even going to her room or having privileges removed. Still, she had to obey those. She accepted that, and was able to focus on simply behaving well then.

We all hugged, and talked about fun things. Michelle improved a lot. Over the next weeks we all stressed good behavior. We showered lots of praise, knowing she'd be good. She knew she wasn't "bad" because of accidents.

Michelle sensed I was starting to be just a sister again soon. Fun stuff was important, too, so I gave Michelle my old piggy bank, and let her see my "soft touch." Just like a mother who has had to get tough still has a tender, loving side.

Stephanie – Learning like D.J. did about different families:

Dad brought in the cake he'd baked today for the wedding shower. Michelle exclaimed, "Don't worry. I'm not touching that cake. I'll be the good princess!"

"Can we talk?" I asked Becky after a few minutes.

I made sure Michelle couldn't hear as Becky said, "Sure, what's on your mind?"

"I'm thinking about what D.J. said. And, how Michelle thinks it might feel if she crawled on a table into a cake today. I don't like the word 'spank,' I say 'hitting.'[273] If I was mom to a real rebel, maybe…" I trailed. "And, Michelle's tough, but she's sensitive underneath. She'd scream at the doctor's after a shot, though now she's quiet to get a lollipop.[274] If D.J. had to do it lightly, Michelle might really cry."

"I understand." I sat on Becky's lap as she continued. "The important thing is, Michelle knows D.J. loves her. Michelle asked if I ever dove into cake. I told her we didn't hit, but if I had done what she did with the samples, they'd have had the talk D.J.

[273] "Silence Is Not Golden," before knowing Charles means worse, she says "you mean hitting?"
[274] "I'm Not D.J.," she wouldn't think to scream louder to get 2 yet.

had right away. It was funny, though she did deserve timeout and a suitable lecture for her age. But, to my parents it would be serious enough to warrant such a threat."

"I guess people were tougher then, huh? It's just I hadn't heard of it at her age. At least, I never saw a parent in my playgroup hit their kid."

Becky thought about how to respond. "Yeah. But, it sounds like D.J. talks like your mom would have. We know D.J. wouldn't hurt her bottom." I concurred. "It's just emotional; Michelle thinks it might hurt. If she wonders how it'll feel, if D.J. would do it, those 'love pats' would be more effective. She wouldn't realize it didn't hurt."

"I know. Some parents do it harder, though, don't they?"

"Some do. Some give one smack. Your family doesn't, that's what's important. Your dad and Uncle Jesse and Joey would never hurt any of you, and neither could I."

"I know," I said with confidence. "I just think about what others feel like."

"That's because you've got a good heart. There's a difference between doing it in love, and doing it in anger. You're at the age where you start to realize that worse stuff goes on. But, it's still important to think like D.J. says she did when she had this talk with your mom. Just remind yourself that most families discipline in love."

"You're right, Aunt Becky. Thanks," I said with a smile; she was already like family. We hugged. "D.J. says she always just presumes the child feels loved."

"Right; and if you worry, just pray the kid feels love from somewhere, and God will bring someone along at some point."

I agreed to do that. I felt much better. "It's not about to happen now, anyway. I might just be too anxious, like Mom would get."

"You are, Steph. But, that's part of what makes you special. This is just like those families back home. We knew we were loved no matter what; we just knew our limits, and didn't cross them. Michelle will behave," she said with certainty.

Becky was right. Michelle hadn't understood completely, of course. Kids try to make sense of the world by what they know. Earlier today she said, "D.J. can spank me now. 'Cause I'm four," because the princesses were. D.J. explained the bad princess just happened to have turned four. If she was still three, and the queen had run out of ways to punish, she'd have spanked the bad princess then. They hugged as Michelle promised to be good; which led to her question and Becky talking about the samples.

However, she understood the important stuff – she had to be good and should never dive into sweets again!

D.J. praised Michelle as we began to mingle. Michelle was offered a cookie by a guest, and she answered contritely, "I can't. I was bad."

D.J. emphasized her warn, tender side, like a mother who has to get tough but is tender and caring underneath. Michelle knew D.J. would normally be just a fun-loving sister. D.J. and Becky came up with the idea of D.J. giving Michelle her piggy bank.

More importantly, I sensed a real bond. Michelle knew "Queen D.J." just lovingly helped her learn to behave, and would only get tough if she had no other choice. Just like a warm, loving mother like Becky's might back in Nebraska years ago.

Becky – Jan. 21 - Showers, Michelle's big improvement:

Michelle loved to practice good behavior. She behaved very well at my shower, stating she was "the good princess" like at first. When the hostess cut the cake, a guest joked about "diving" into it and Michelle scolded, "Are you nuts?" I explained that was a

saying, and she wouldn't literally do that. Michelle spouted, "Good. You don't want to be the bad princess. Or Queen D.J. will break your heart." The lady promised to be good.

D.J. let her have a leftover piece of mine Monday. She behaved well at D.J.'s birthday party, too. She wasn't perfect, but she was around cake, that's for sure. Michelle was learning self-control was vital. Michelle never crawled on tables again, as she said, "Only bad princesses do that." We all praised her a lot for how good she was.

The guys weren't raunchy at the bachelor party; Jesse wanted to show his total devotion to me. They had a Three Stooges marathon, acting like them a lot.

4-16 Stephanie Gets Framed Tues., Jan. 22-Fri. Feb. 1, 1991

Joey – Wed., Jan. 23 – Steph's Glasses; His Health:

Jesse used reading glasses a little, but he was older. Steph's yearly checkup was just after the teacher sent the note, so she got in to the eye doctor he recommended fast. She didn't need glasses all the time like she feared; she didn't even need her reading ones all the time once her eyes rested a bit, so they weren't always with her.[275]

It was like my cholesterol problem early.[276] I ate moderately, but exercise chasing Michelle as she started walking more helped me most. I did more with Steph, too; I even climbed trees with her. Soon, my cholesterol wasn't a problem. Like the filling I had put in before I moved in, I just felt the need to take better care of myself helping raise Danny's girls; except for one time it came out, I didn't have any problems with it.

Jesse – Explaining Danny to Michelle:

Danny had the biggest problem. Michelle wondered why he didn't always punish her. He'd said he would. "Well, munchkin," I began, "your dad still feels sad since your mom died. Joey and I moved in to help raise you, but it's just our job to support him when he punishes you." I didn't tell her my fears of becoming my own dad; I didn't know if she'd understand, and we didn't want her taking advantage. She didn't.

"Does D.J. punish just if I'm really bad?"

"She will, but remember, it's not how bad you behave. Your dad just lets D.J. handle a few things 'cause he's sad about your mom dying. Caapiche?"

"Capiche." She understood. We talked about it a bit more, but not much. She couldn't have tons of empathy yet, at her age, but she could start, and she did.

Sometimes, though, Danny's actions really confused all of us.

4-17 A Fish Called Martin Feb. 7-8, 1991

D.J. - Fri., Feb. 8 – All Those Fish:

Dad bought enough fish to last till Michelle got married! She had them till she tired of them. We donated her aquarium to a nursing home where I volunteered.[277]

Steph and I couldn't believe it. I was almost too shocked to speak. Dad was too embarrassed, confused, or something. We felt we had to confront him. "Dad, what are all those goldfish?" I finally asked, stunned but suspecting the answer.

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[275] No indication of them in books, the problem likely went away; Steph doesn't wear them in the "Fuller House" series. Tiredness or something may have caused it for a while.

[276] Not heard of again after season 1, so it must have been solved.

[277] "The Volunteer," the aquarium from "A Fish Called Martin" would be on the wall we don't see, but she'd grow tired of it soon like many kids that age.

"Well…" He was at a loss for words, very weird for him. "Deej, I just…I don't want Michelle to have to deal with another pet's death." He couldn't bring himself to mention Heaven before admitting that Martin had died. He feared Michelle would ask if Martin was with Mom, and he didn't want to think about missing her.

"You don't want her to have to deal with death? I don't believe it!" I threw up my hands. "Dad, people die. I mean, pets die. And people. Like Mom."

"Look at all the fishies," we heard from downstairs after a couple minutes.

Stephanie rolled her eyes. "Now what?" she said in a slightly sarcastic tone.

"Oh boy. I hadn't thought about Michelle finding those. They were for if her new fish died, before we knew it was pregnant."

Michelle came running upstairs and proclaimed, "Now I got a bunch of baby fishies and the ones in the kitchen!"

"Oh, no, those aren't yours, Michelle," Stephanie uttered. "They're…party favors. For the wedding."

Dad patted Stephanie on the head and said "Bless you" in a very relieved tone. I, too, was rarely happier than right then with Stephanie's ad libbing ability.

"We give those at the wedding, Daddy?" Dad nodded, and went to tell Jesse.[278]

Jesse couldn't believe Dad bought all those fish. He was glad someone thought of something, because he had no idea what he'd have said when she found those dozens of fish and bowls. He didn't mind giving them out at the wedding. Dad wanted to keep Michelle from being sad. But, we all knew that just wasn't the way to do it.

Danny:

I paced. "It's not just that. Jess, you'll be moving out, and I haven't had the heart to talk about it. She figures you'll be in your room like usual after your marriage."

"What?!" D.J. shrieked, coming up behind me. I could see why she overreacted sometimes. I put her through a lot when she was a teenager; I was so inconsistent and couldn't deal with change. "You haven't even told her?" D.J. asked incredulously.

"Whoa, take it easy, Deej. I told her…once, a couple weeks ago," Jesse said.

"You were Pam's substitute for her, Jess. You bonded with her so much. I couldn't stand to break her heart. Then, with me having to start punishing her, it was already such a change for her…." I probably meant for me just as much.

Jesse wasn't sure what to say. "I'll be here to work with Joey every morning, you and Joey can fill in singing her to sleep. You go in there even more than me if she has a nightmare, and she doesn't have too many. Maybe it won't be that bad."

I agreed. "She'll miss you, but…" I hesitated to look at D.J., but I knew I needed her assistance. D.J. promised to try and be more mothering, but she expected us to be the ones to tell Michelle, and we never could, though it was our job.

"Look, man," Jesse said compassionately, placing a hand on my shoulder, "let's just forget it, so she won't worry too much before the wedding. That's why I haven't pushed it. I told her once, and she didn't have any questions, maybe she's okay with it."

D.J. and I agreed, though Michelle didn't grasp the meaning at her age.

Jesse was a mother figure, but we didn't comprehend how much. He'd been there so much, even moving ten blocks away would have been like having a mother move out. It wouldn't be as bad as a divorce, but we should have had a real transition. All of us

[278] Since they "lost the hall," according to the wedding ep., and went to the house, it was even easier.

secretly wanted Jesse and Becky to move into the attic, though, and would have even with a smooth transition. Thankfully, they wanted to just as much as we did.

"Tell you what, Danny. You know how I can't eat sushi since I killed my fish as a kid? If you get over whatever's keeping you from dealing with this stuff, I will eat sushi."

I laughed. From Jesse, that was a big thing. "It's a deal." I then put it off for a long while, till D.J. forced my hand by going to Spain. Things seemed okay, after all.

We'd worked a lot with Michelle on self control. She was left alone with D.J.'s cake at her party. We increased the time, and helped her think of things to distract her. She knew she'd be in really big trouble if she wrecked the wedding, but she didn't worry about what kind. She loved to show off how good she could be.

4-18 The Wedding (1) and
4-19 The Wedding (2) Feb. 14, 1991

Becky – Feb. 14 - Clearing up wedding confusion:

The girls had off for the wedding, because of the February vacation. Thankfully, everyone could take vacation at work or – with my family – didn't have much work then. Farming is a year-round job, but the busiest times are planting and harvesting. And, farmers work more than Monday-Friday, anyway; flying out on a weekend would have been the same thing to many of them.

The day wasn't traditional, but the cake was. Michelle convinced Jesse to go with chocolate at first, but after the samples, we quickly decided to go with regular white cake. She was still excited, but controlled herself very well.

At least we didn't use what Kimmy suggested – checkered or striped bridesmaid dresses. That was worse than Jesse's first choice of tuxedos.

Jesse skydived just before the wedding, but borrowed Danny's stain remover so he could get cleaned up fast. It was so hectic; normally I loved tomatoes, but with my wedding possibly ruined, I hated them then. Brides get emotional sometimes.

Some good fortune occurred that day, too, though. The choir whose bus we commandeered had sung "Forever" at a wedding a couple weeks earlier. Jesse told the driver after we got on what song he wanted us to sing; I couldn't believe how well that worked out, but that happens sometimes.

Jesse and I planned to move out, and Michelle gave him her pig. He quickly gave it back, but she let Teddy keep it as a gift after he moved, even when he returned.

We lost the hall since the wedding took so long. Danny explained to Michelle what happened and that he knew she'd be good at home, and the same rules applied as they would have there. She licked her lips eyeing the cake in the kitchen.

D.J. intervened. "Daddy's right. He's the boss. But, I can punish you too." D.J. reminded her she didn't want to have to yell, that was enough to stop her now. She didn't want to spend time in the corner with everyone here. "Being the good princess at this reception is the most important thing you've ever done."

"I can do it!" she said with certainty. "I don't want to look at a wall."

Michelle was very cautious around the cake. She wasn't scared of what could happen, but the story of the princesses was in her mind.

She reached out and touched the cake delicately. She would never have dared go further, though without D.J. involved, who knows what would have happened.

D.J. was worried, though - she caught her gently touching it. So, she joked about

her “looking for a place to dive in” and “punished” her by giving her something yucky to her, the pate. Michelle knew D.J. knew she wouldn’t literally do it, though.

Stephanie – Loving bond between D.J. and Michelle:

“Are you just my sister now?” The question was Michelle’s; she’d crawled in bed with D.J. for a cuddle. D.J. promised her she was just her sister now.

“I’m so proud. I knew you’d be good, and you were very well behaved,” D.J. said joyfully. D.J. knew she’d avoid bothering the cake. Michelle hated to think of how loud D.J. might get. She thought my joke of no dessert till her own wedding was possible. Knowing she’d be in very big trouble was plenty to keep her honest. She wasn’t thinking about D.J.’s talk anymore, yet she still had it in the back of her mind.

“That cake was so big. I wanted a piece first. But, you and Daddy said ‘no.’” D.J. praised her more, and Michelle added sheepishly, “You would have yelled a lot!”

“You’ve got a very good heart. You know to listen. Daddy sends you to your room or takes away stuff as punishment so you learn in your heart about right and wrong. That’s why I punish you, too, so you learn to be good. Now that you’re behaving so well and obeying Daddy all the time, I can go back to just being your sister.”

“I like being a good girl,” Michelle said softly but proudly, as she sidled up to D.J.. She blushed slightly at her naughtiness, yet felt very loved and protected.

I felt so sad thinking of D.J. being so tough. I felt just as bad for Michelle.

They cuddled while smiling broadly at each other. I felt the loving bond as I looked over. Michelle sensed D.J.’s great love for her. In correction and rebonding from toddlerhood, Michelle learned D.J. would always love her and be tender toward her. I could tell D.J. would always care, and Michelle knew however D.J. punished, it was done in love. She wasn’t a mom, but the love and affection were like that.

Joey – Mar. 5 - Rusty’s improvement:

Michelle was really well behaved now. As a matter of fact, there were very few times when she was four that Danny had to send her to her room or take away a privilege; almost none after the talk D.J. had before the wedding.

Even Rusty was behaving well. I might have been a larger influence on him than Danny was. Sure, Danny helped him recognize how good it could be to have a stepfather, but I guided him into the correct way to pull pranks while not hurting others. I still pulled them a bit. I loved to play, but my play was more complex than that of little kids, because my mind was. I didn’t really believe stuff I pretended, I was just having fun.

I also convinced him to try out for baseball. Danny planned to coach a team, and Rusty wanted to join. Danny and Cindy realized that things were probably not going to work out for them. However, we’d made great friends; that was the important part.

Jesse – His Not Being On Second Floor Helps Michelle:

Part of Michelle’s improvement was that she wasn’t hearing an imaginary rooster and getting me up with the sun, since I wasn’t on that floor now. Okay, I’ll admit, I never liked saying “no” to her. I didn't want her left alone, so we had a deal that if she woke up,

she'd get me up and I'd join her for breakfast and to talk and stuff.[279] Joey distracted her more, and showed her ways to play in her room alone.

Now, she didn't lose her impulsiveness by any means. The point is, our door was locked, and she had to choose others. Joey was often the one. She disliked Danny saying to go back to bed if it was too early, and while one of her sisters would invite her in for a cuddle, she was too used to getting up and having the run of the house with an adult – me – watching early in the morning, like maybe 5:30 or 6 at times, though usually closer to 6:30 or so. So of course, she took the path of least resistance.

Still, unlike me, Joey taught Michelle she wouldn't have the run of the house when she got up, and that helped. What helped even more was, if they had a real early breakfast together or something, they'd talk about right and wrong and how to behave at times, using cartoons as a guide, like he'd do early with Steph.

Joey didn't enforce limits, but with that influence, and Danny enforcing them consistently, things were improving a fair amount. She was learning the most important thing in life was to play and have fun, but at least she was doing it responsibly.

4-21 The Hole-in-the-Wall Gang	Mar. 8, 1991

Stephanie - Mar. 25 – Start of Baseball Playing:

I was surprised when Dad thought I could pitch, to be honest. I still recall a couple Giants games from when I was little, and Ozzie Smith played shortstop for the other team. Talk about graceful! He was incredible. It was like watching ballet out there.

I really thought I'd be a shortstop. Dad's team was short on pitching, though, and he had a shortstop. I still had some association with shortstop, though. Someone had Ozzie Smith's number 1 when I tried out, so Dad suggested another shortstop with a great work ethic, Cal Ripken, Junior. So, I wore his number 8.

When Dad asked me for a practice throw, I threw a normal, tailing fastball – how one moves depends on how it's thrown, with the fingers across or with the seams. Rusty noticed the ball's direction, but it wasn't a real curve; he'd never seen a real curveball in action. So, he remarked about the curve. A kid should be in his or her middle teens before throwing a curveball, so developing muscles don't get hurt.

I wanted another pitch, so Cousin Steve taught me the knuckleball, which he'd tinkered with for a while, when Dad took me up to Stanford before our first practice, as one of our little father-daughter times together.

I'd always been a good athlete, whether it was tree climbing, ballet, dashing around hiding stuff when D.J. and I made a hole in Dad's wall, or whatever. And, of course, I played soccer some, plus other sports playing around with friends. I was also quite good at kickball.

4-22 Stephanie Plays the Field	Mar. 9-22, 1991
4-23 Joey Goes Hollywood	Mar. 29-Apr. 5, 1991

D.J. - Mar. 29 – Danny punishes for the Tokyo calls:

Dad was doing great. Timeout and lost privileges worked very well with all of us. Michelle was making these calls lately by just pressing buttons on the telephone, some of which cost a lot of money. She'd actually talked to one person in Tokyo. I think she was

[279] Teaser, "Shape Up," implies Michelle gets up early and likely goes to Jesse right away

pressing the tunes to songs she knew. Anyway, Dad sent her to her room for timeout after a long (for her age) talk about why it was wrong.

Michelle always went to her room when told. Timeout worked very well with her. She didn't call those numbers again.

She'd had that toy phone before, but just wanted to experiment with numbers, like playing tunes on the phone. Now, she stuck with the toy one again, like Dad told her.

She'd tried a couple other little things, like sneaking bags of cookies upstairs under her shirt, but they were minor. Dad caught her right away before she got them up there; he knew her tricks. So, she wasn't punished for that.

Overall, though, she didn't get in much trouble, and listened very well to Dad. I figured we were home free as far as her behavior. Not quite, though.

Stephanie – May 17 - Teaching Michelle to Count, etc.:

I'd helped Michelle learn to count to 100, but I didn't realize that it didn't mean she could grasp other things. I learned today it was important to consider the child's ability to understand a story like "The Boy Who Cried Wolf." Or, at least, to make sure they understood what I was trying to say. Things like this were what helped me learn from my mistakes, and do even greater things next year and the year after in school.

4-24 Girls Just Wanna Have Fun May 17, 1991

Jesse – Sat. May 18 – Michelle Sees Danny as Boss; More Growth:

My talks were usually good enough, but D.J. figured she'd better have a long talk about tricking people, too, just in case. It worked well. Michelle knew they did fun things even if D.J. was reacting like a mom. We'd discuss how D.J. did Honeybee stuff with Steph or played games when she babysat. Michelle had matured to where she understood Danny was still boss if D.J. drifted toward that realm. Again, her mind was growing to where everything wasn't black and white. D.J. helped a little, but just because Danny needed her to, or was busy with something else.

Michelle thought of Danny and me as the authorities when playing house. D.J. wasn't proactive enough to have a major role in her mind. She pretended to use her if someone did something "really, really bad," but didn't play D.J.; she just said something like, "D.J. really yelled and you're grounded." She knew when D.J. meant business the few times D.J. corrected her now.

This is why D.J.'s talk about tricking others was so helpful. It was kind and loving, yet Michelle knew D.J. would get a lot tougher if Michelle didn't listen. We all helped her understand, on her level. Steph's trick with the ice cream really helped, too. We used it to help Michelle see why we had to be nice to others. It worked a lot better than that boy who cried wolf did, since it was more concrete for her.

4-25 The Graduates Wed. May 22- Fri. May 24, 1991

D.J. – Junior High Valedictorian:

I'd weathered the storms and improved so much; I was able to give the speech. It was so exciting. I'd reacted a bit much, perhaps, but all that I put myself through had been worth it. High school would be tougher, but I made the honor roll, at least. I was involved in a lot more, though, and there were four years versus just two that I would have had to be at the top of my class.

Becky - June 8 – Steph's team wins; What happens to Cindy; Melina's dad:

Stephanie's team won the championship game 4-2 today. Danny and Cindy had stopped dating in May, but they were good friends. After the game, Cindy met the man she would marry. We were all out having pizza, and Joey and this other guy seemed to be playing a comedy version of h-o-r-s-e with jokes, impressions, and so on. The fellow had a two-year-old nephew who he was raising because of issues with the boy's parents.

Melina's dad, on the other hand, was back on his feet. Apparently, he'd sunk everything into this scheme after his wife ran off. It left him penniless for a while. Dmitri and Melina now lived there to help Gina, whose health was failing. In fact, Dmitri dated one of the young ladies who helped Gina. They would marry within a year.

It was a shame that the Smash Club's owner went into the hospital while we were gone. Jesse loved that man like another father. The club would close in October.

Stephanie – Kindergarten Interview:

At her checkup, when she got her shots before Kindergarten, Dr. Landress felt it would be good to make sure Michelle was ready for the full day program, though it wasn't heavily structured in the afternoon. Kids born that late mostly went into one of the half day classes. Someone from the schools came to interview Michelle a few days later, because she was born only three weeks before the cutoff date.

Michelle followed instructions well, like she'd need to at school. That's another place where she'd have been far worse if someone hadn't made her listen before age 4. When behavior was brought up, Dad praised her, and said that, like with us, he wanted to handle totally out of control stuff, rather than the principal. "I'm sure she'll listen," he said. Our schools let parents choose. Some didn't believe in physical punishment, others said only a parent or a parent-type figure should use that.

"D.J. said if I'm out of control, she'll take care of it," Michelle blurted. When asked what she meant, she said, "Daddy gets sad 'cause Mommy died."

I rescued Dad by explaining the situation. "Dad's been perfect for months now. He just needed lots of encouragement at first because Mom was the one with us as preschoolers." Dad confirmed this, and so did D.J.; the fellow was satisfied that if there were problems, with the adults and even D.J. helping, they wouldn't be too bad.

Joey – Joey's show cancelled, summer break:

I was really glad for Rusty. The one person he never pulled a prank on was Michelle when he first came to our house with his mother. He'd matured a lot since, and he would be a great big brother for that kid.

Unfortunately, I wasn't doing so well. My cartoon show got canned. This time, my agent wasn't on vacation, so I could hear the news from him. First, there was some dispute with the animators. Then, Frankie and Annette didn't want to do voices. Finally, after they tried to turn my character into a surfing kangaroo that also played cricket while trying to learn American college football, they scrapped the project.

That was okay, though. Jesse and Becky would be leaving at the end of June, with Becky returning a couple weeks before Jesse. We'd have lots of fun on vacation; San Diego had Sea World and a great zoo, and especially the beach, for D.J..

We visited Danny's nephew Steve and Stanford, too. He would be a senior, and was proud of Steph choosing Ripken's number; Ripken played for his home town Orioles. He had met someone nice, too, and they got married in the summer of '93.

Danny - July 4 – When Becky Learned, Granny Tanner Moves, etc.:

Becky found out in late May, when she was about 2 ½ months along. It caught her by surprise, but Pam was the same way. We hadn't planned on D.J. so soon.

My mom moved back to the home she'd owned for almost twenty years in early August, where I lived till I was nine. It was her dream to return. Now, she would.

Michelle really enjoyed day camp, and Stephanie had fun helping her. I know Steph would have preferred an overnight camp, but it was great to see them getting along so well. Steph was a leader for several of the kids, in fact.

That made me more confident about Kindergarten. Michelle begged to be big like her sisters. I really wanted her to go, too, though she could have been kept back till age five. However, she seemed very ready, and with our family, it was important that she be in full-day Kindergarten if she could handle it.

Michelle could count to 100. She was really clever, and did very well socially. Her behavior was very good. Her attitude toward rules had improved markedly. That meant I wasn't having to put her in timeout or remove privileges much at all.

She knew I was the boss. It would be a while before Michelle could understand my sadness over Pam's passing, but she could empathize more and more.

She'd be many months ahead of her age level; Steph was ten months older when she went. Still, Jesse's attitude of conquering anything was taking root in all of them, and I felt she was capable, with help, of doing as well as kids born in spring and summer of 1986. My girls had their own styles, but each was a born leader.

Over the next few years, Stephanie would have her problems, but she would establish herself as someone who could really help others effectively, starting with Michelle those first weeks of school.

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3. Born To Lead - Sept. 1991-May, 1995

5-1 Double Trouble Aug. 26, 1991

Stephanie – Aug. 27 – First, best memories:

Sometimes, the biggest things have the smallest beginnings. Take yesterday. I did what any normal, loving sibling should do. I helped Michelle feel better her first day of Kindergarten. I would have done it even without D.J.'s guidance my first year, after Mom died. I knew Michelle would need help. She was really grateful.

Michelle considers that her first vivid memory, years later. She's always loved being around people. That's what's always helped her think about what love is. It's being there for someone no matter what's wrong. My first vivid memory is Mom bringing Michelle and Mr. Bear home. D.J. recalls being a bit nervous, then doing really well in a small role in a class play as her first vivid memory

Today, Michelle started telling everyone what a genius I was. And, I helped another kid feel better. Hey, she knew where my class was by now. My teacher was understanding, but as time wore on, I really did seem to need an office or something.

Joey – Michelle and Naps:

Stephanie never needed naps, even in all-day Kindergarten. Oh, she took one very rarely, and would have in a special part of the room if needed during the less structured afternoon time, but she never did, so I told Michelle they didn't.

Michelle was good at naps, though – those early starts Jesse talked about meant she was often tired, and occasionally took a rest at the end of preschool before lunch; not often, but more than Steph at that age. She napped some in Kindergarten.

However, she also started getting up later, because it was a longer day and she was more tired, and thus slept more when she got to bed. I was glad, in a way; and Steph would really be glad in a few weeks, when she became Michelle's roommate.

For now, she was most interested in making friends, and having her first playdate with one of her Kindergarten friends; all her preschool ones had gone to one of the half-day classes, except for Aaron, who entered her class partway through the year.

5-2 Matchmaker Michelle Sept. 13-14, 1991

Jesse – Sept. 14 – Michelle's search for a Mommy:

Michelle was starting to make distinctions in her mind. One was that Mommies were women. She sensed something really special about them, and like any kid in that spot, it was rough to realize she didn't have what other kids did.

We talked a lot about Pam, and how close we were. She saw how D.J. worked wither just like Pam had with me, helping her learn to be good and obey the rules, which she did real well now. I reminded her it wasn't just adults helping, either. Steph helped in school, so she kept volunteering Steph to help others.

"Joey and I did that to our moms all the time," Danny said. "And, D.J. told Pam she volunteered her to bake cookies as she boarded the school bus once. See, mothers are people who are always there for you; they don't have to be female."

D.J. came in and hugged her, and told more about their mom, once she came home. They talked about the future, too, like her Honeybee slumber party, and how she or Becky or maybe even Steph would take her and have fun there. Michelle focused on the good things she had, and realized all of us were a bit like mothers.

5-3 Take My Sister, Please Sept. 20-21, 1991

Danny – Sept. 20 – Becoming Michelle's boss and Michelle listening well:

Michelle charged after a bunch of potato chips, ready to tear into them. I quietly sat her on a chair till she settled down, and told her she could get up when she was ready. She settled perfectly, got up a few minutes later, and behaved well then.

D.J. had handled Michelle beautifully, till I was ready to discipline. I was the boss to her now, though. Dr. Landress said we'd recovered well. I'd learned it was okay to discipline my princess. We had few problems, and just talking convinced her to be good if we did. For instance, she spit at Steph. Jesse and I talked with her, and I said no dessert if it happened again. She knew it was yucky, but Aaron did it on the playground once. She wouldn't have dared do it to anyone in authority, though - "D.J.'d have a herd of cows!" Michelle exclaimed. She sensed it was bad, but kids that age try to get reactions. She didn't draw one, and never spit at a person again.

A lot of the problem afterward was that unlike Cindy, Vicki and I reached a point

where only Pam and I had been more in love. I kept thinking about Pam.

D.J. - Mon. Sept. 23 – High School plans, activities:

Stephanie loved how Michelle idolized her like we had Mom. Michelle sent more and more kids to her after she'd helped Michelle's first day of Kindergarten. No wonder Steph listened when I said she'd have such a great role as the big sister in their room.

I didn't try for the school paper till next year.[280] Part of that was because of all my other plans. The worst part was, it was tough going from editor to the drudgery they assign to freshmen. Instead, I ran for Student Council.

I sought to help many less fortunate kids, so they didn't feel left out. This not only applied to people like Kimmy, but to the handicapped students in our school.[281] I wanted to do a lot of volunteer work. Kimmy and I joined S.A.D.D. - Students Against Driving Drunk – here after doing it in Junior High. I also went to a nursing home a half dozen times, once a week. I was too busy with other things, excited about boys, and depressed by Eddie going downhill to keep doing it. I wanted to encourage volunteering in many areas by running for Student Council.

As in Junior High, when you go to high school you meet kids from other schools, if your district is big enough. Some just didn't understand how strange Kimmy was. I tried to protect her by helping her next year to see some of her dumber thoughts shouldn't be made public, but she felt like I was bossing her around a bit. Still, that didn't matter. Today, I learned I'd won election to Student Council.

5-4 Oh Where, Oh Where Has My Little Girl Gone? Fri., Sept. 27, 1991

Danny - Mon., Sept. 30 – Worries, picnics, and Reunion:

Was I ever glad when last week ended! Starting the 23rd we'd had a week devoted to teenage problems. I heard about eating disorders, gangs, teen pregnancy, and worse, all last week. It's no wonder I went ballistic when I accidentally saw a note from Kathy Santoni about some mega crisis of D.J.'s. That wasn't like me, but I was very scared. Of course, it was a rumor about D.J.'s kissing and not a problem D.J. had at all.

5- 5 The King and I Oct. 5, 1991

Joey – Reunion Game Results, Teaching Michelle Not to Always Mimic Jesse:

The family reunion on the 5th was the perfect panacea. This time of year worked much better than Christmas. It was great to see everyone have fun. D.J. and Steph won the three-legged race, and Uncle Jesse and Michelle won their match, but, one of Mom's sisters ate pie like there was no tomorrow with her dentures out.

Michelle showed she was just like Jesse. We talked about forgiveness that night. She acted like many normal four-year-olds. It was the start of us emphasizing how his attitude was really bad at times, especially where he wouldn't think of others. Because

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[280] "Road To Tokyo," she tries out writing an editorial. High school papers are often quite selective. Ninth graders don't get many good jobs; indeed, in some, freshmen aren't allowed on the paper or yearbook, though they'd still have representatives on Council

[281] If it's like your narrator's area, they'd have a program to help young people in lower grades, and they could go to a school of their choice later. Kids with challenges aren't often shown in Hollywood. There would be some, but it's not unusual to have them all in one school in lower grades with resources to help. So none were in the girls' classes till high school, but there were a few there.

she trusted him so completely, it took years for that to really sink in.

Kids normally think parents are infallible till a certain age. Jesse was her mother figure. It was hard for her to fathom how his attitude of not thinking of others was bad, and how he was trying hard to shake his old attitude.

It was someone else's turn to schedule it, so our appearance was again sporadic, especially because the time for the Honeybee slumber party could get moved around.

5- 6 The Legend of Ranger Joe Oct. 9, 1991

Stephanie - Wed. Oct. 9 – Helping more kids:

Today was ridiculous. Michelle had come to me with questions for playground disputes and such, though it wasn't like when I'd need D.J. my first few months grieving Mom's death. And, I usually loved helping. It was nice when Michelle told a few kids to come to me; it was even cute. But, this?

Alas, not only did I have to correct some of the others, now Michelle was too wound up with her new tap shoes, one result of putting a four-year-old in Kindergarten all day. The teacher called for me to calm her.[282] I listened a lot before and after school, and even during school. Kindergarten was less organized than higher grades, but still, I'd done so well with others, and it was too little a problem for the principal.

So, I gave her a firm but loving speech about proper and improper behavior in school. I instructed her not to tap dance the rest of the day. And, then I said I'd tell Dad and D.J. if she did. I wasn't sure who she'd listen to better; she was good at obeying Dad, but I still thought D.J. should be mentioned just in case.

Then, the most amazing thing happened. She told me she thought I knew better than anyone what to do. We talked for a couple minutes, and it turned out she perceived me as a boss here, in a way. She'd been building me up so much; she really started to believe in me. I'd had other kids saying the same thing lately.

It was incredible. I was becoming a real leader in comforting - kids often sought me out for hugs or to have them tie their shoelaces - but also in disciplining.

Danny:

Steph's potential thrilled me. I'd heard they had Principal's Assistants in Australia - called deputy headmasters sometimes. I thought Steph could do what they did

I gave her a book a guest on "Wake Up, San Francisco," Michele Borba, gave me. It was "Self-Esteem: A Classroom Affair."[283] Stephanie had it on her bookshelf while practicing for her spelling bee, but more importantly, I figured she could use it to help some of the kids at her school and even herself to feel more self-confident.

Amazingly, I didn't push her so hard she lost interest. I was too busy pushing her too hard in dance to push her too hard in this.

Jesse – No more ads, Stephanie's reputation spreading:

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[282] "The Legend of Ranger Joe" - Steph had to be called to hear her, as she'd graduated to a different playground. While some different grades eat together, at a school that size Kindergarteners and 4th graders would have no contact, and be in separate parts of the school. This can be blamed on the fact she was in school all day and not five yet, but there are no other problems, so she settled fast.

[283] On her shelf in "Crushed" in the last scene with D.J., a week before the Fourth Grade Bee and days before the class one. She'd be studying for the spelling bee then, too.

Joey and I hadn't done an ad for months. Now, with his Ranger Joe show, the ad agency was officially out of business. It's hard to run your own company.

Stephanie had what we hadn't - an enthusiastic supporter who spread the news by word of mouth like few others could. Whether it was a kid who hadn't wanted to get ready for school and had come in pajamas, or a playground bully, or an argument between friends, Michelle told everyone that Stephanie had the answers.

Steph had some, but she used us a lot. It was like D.J. had done with Michelle, inspiring Mrs. Myer to sign D.J.'s yearbook, "To our future first female President."

5- 7 The Volunteer	Oct. 12, 1991
5- 8 Gotta Dance	Oct. 19-Nov. 2, 1991

Joey – Nov. 12 - Michelle tests D.J.'s limits:

The babies couldn't come for a while, so we had Michelle's party.[284]

Before I knew it, she and her friends grabbed big pieces of cake. Michelle knew she'd done wrong – she muttered a low, "I'm sorry. I just did it 'cause Teddy's arm was in it." She looked downcast as D.J. took her hand. Steph and I cleaned the others.

Michelle was very good, as good as any child this age, but D.J. knew she still needed help, and took her upstairs and had a long talk with her. Thankfully she never did this again; even this wasn't too bad. The piece she got out wasn't that huge.

"This wasn't as bad, but you must learn to control yourself. Now there is no more birthday cake," D.J. concluded lovingly yet firmly, as she finished wiping her off. "Sit here for timeout and settle till you feel like getting up," D.J. instructed at the end.

Michelle did as she was told; she obeyed D.J. very well. Still, it was her party, so she was a bit miffed. D.J. had come down a minute before and was helping set up a game in the living room, when Michelle came downstairs upset.

Stephanie reminded her, "Well, Michelle, it's just like what we talked about with talking in class. When I was your age I talked all the time; my teacher even sent a note home once." I had to grin; she rambled like Danny. "But, I wouldn't listen a few times when they said 'no,' so I had to write sentences and almost had to stay in from recess. That was no fun, but it taught me to have self-control."

"She's right," I said, building on the notion. "Think of this as staying in for five minutes from a two-hour recess where all the teachers dress as cartoon characters."

"Right, and there's cake and ice cream, and…did I see a smile?" she asked excitedly. Michelle couldn't help but grin at the idea of teachers as cartoons characters.

"I think you did, Steph." Michelle felt much better and had fun the rest of the day.

I took Danny some pants down while D.J. watched things, as Becky's labor would take a while – her contractions were still seven minutes apart.

Once the party was over, we left for the hospital, ate in the cafeteria, and waited. The twins were born soon before we planned to leave to take Michelle home for bed.

Becky – Cakes, and Where Nick and Irene Were:

We usually had the family party separate from one with kids, to ease confusion. There was a cake then for everyone, but it got eaten pretty fast; guests often took pieces home. Some families give the birthday kid one cake and have another for everyone the

[284] Labor takes hours, and can take over a day, so they'd have the party. They'd never all leave just to wait for hours in a hospital, though Danny's being there is likely. They'd go there after the party.

same day, but that got too confusing, in Danny's mind, and even Danny realized after a while that wouldn't have been a good rule with Michelle. She got enough cake as it was. At times, like at her fourth birthday, we had the two together, because of schedules; the family one was in the morning, the "Big Bird" one in the afternoon.

Jesse's parents saw us that Sunday, a couple days before Michelle's party with her friends. However, Nick was really busy at work, and Irene was visiting her mom in another hospital, so they didn't get to see the twins till the next day.

It wasn't quite as bad, as Michelle hadn't started it, but D.J. still thought Danny might remove dessert that night. When he didn't, that and a comment by Joey about Dennis the Menace gave her a typical stress dream, but that's all that happened.

5- 9 Happy Birthday, Babies (1) and	
5-10 Happy Birthday, Babies (2)	Nov. 12, 1991
5-11 Nicky and/or Alexander	Nov. 14-5, 1991

Danny – Nov. 14 – How the "Bachelor of the Month" Worked:

I'd gone from picking dates apart because they weren't Pam, to going with a nice woman with a kid, to what I did a few months ago. I put my name in for this Bay Area magazine to possibly be their most eligible bachelor.[285]

This magazine sent promos to eligible area bachelors. The man had to be a public figure of some sort, though that was a wide range. He wrote back if he accepted being considered. I mean, if they chose at random, they could get a guy who's engaged. When I said I'd accept, I submitted information which helped them vote. The qualities I listed meant they chose me for their November issue, around Thanksgiving. If I hadn't called to stop it, I'd have had some women calling close to Christmas. The bachelor got a lot of dates at first, and could schedule them anytime. If he spaced them out, or women took down the information for later, he might have dates for a few weeks after the next issue, though of course most came before that next issue.

The magazine had a screening process for dates. Women called a number the magazine gave. It's like when they screen radio callers before they go on the air; that kept almost all the bad eggs away. Some crank calls could get through, but I never got any. Of course, I got a few women who looked me up in the book, too, but they were all good candidates. You still had to be kind of careful, not knowing who some were. So, I went out to dinner with my dates, with a couple museum trips, since they wanted to get to know me. That way, I wasn't bringing just anyone home.

My biggest mistake was, it was so hectic with the twins, I didn't think about explaining it to Michelle and planning well with her. If we hadn't been so busy with the births, I would have, and I'd have made sure I was there more to tuck her in; like, maybe a fourth, rotating with Jesse, Joey, and her older sisters.

5-12 Bachelor of the Month	Nov. 16-26, 1991

Stephanie – Wed. Nov. 27 – Dealing with Michelle sneaking out:

Michelle and Teddy snuck out to see Dad, but he only grounded her from playing at friends' houses or having friends over for a week, hence he mentioned her "social calendar." She was allowed to play outside her yard, like when Joey taught her to ride her

[285] A logical progression from a small date here and there to "Lust in the Dust" to Cindy.

bike. That next day, D.J. took dessert away for a week, and gave her a stern lecture on what could have happened. Removing dessert was usually enough with her.

Michelle said she was with someone. She couldn't see the trouble she could have been in before she was able to call for help; Dad didn't know she was there. So, because Michelle was acting a little superior, D.J. pretended I'd disappeared trying something like Michelle did. She made Michelle frantic.

Finally, with Michelle on the verge of tears, D.J. came down and said to come up. I'd been there all along. But, she'd wanted to teach Michelle how we'd felt. It worked for now. Michelle was upset, but not much, once we all talked about it. She was learning to think of others more. She'd kept Dad in her sight the whole time. But, we showed her how easily she could have lost track, and how much worse we'd have felt then.

Jesse - Smash Club closed, owner very ill:

I still couldn't believe the Smash Club had been closed for a month. I kept thinking about the great times there. Yeah, I'd outgrown some of that, but when I visited the owner in the hospital the day before Thanksgiving, and told him about my babies, he wasn't the only one ready to shed a few tears. He'd loved me like a father, and now he could hardly talk after a second stroke, though he was coherent again.

His strokes came slowly till next summer, not all at once like Danny's dad's. Some people, in fact, have them, recover, and never have another.

I felt helpless, just like with Dad's heart problems. Dad was on blood thinner, after a checkup revealed a fair amount of blockage. I think his anger problems really weakened that man's heart, too - he wasn't that old.

He planned to return to work, and even boasted that he could make it another eighteen years, till my boys were ready to join him. I knew, in the back of my mind, he couldn't keep up his business nearly that long, though. I didn't know whether to tell Dad the truth or not. It was ironic that I was thinking about that in the hospital room of the one man who knew part of my secret; I'd stopped by there many mornings acting like my last requirement before graduating had been Government my first semester.

5-13 Easy Rider	Nov. 30, 1991
5-14 Sisters in Crime	Dec. 7-8, 1991

Joey:

Michelle was riding well by now. She was really good over Christmas; the girls loved sweets during holidays, but Michelle didn't overindulge much. She had her normal sugar rushes, and got a settling timeout once when she wouldn't stop squirting people, but otherwise she was good. And, she settled down right away. D.J. said if this is as much Dennis the Menace as she did, she could handle it. Kids will be kids, and that was tame, compared to the earliest Dennis did. We all preferred the more modern Dennis.

D.J. got her sisters in trouble earlier, but Danny knew it wouldn't happen again. D.J. felt bad when she admitted it, and he knew she'd talk to them about it. He grounded them that day when he found out. That was enough since it was a Sunday; they would have gone out. Michelle knew normally, D.J.'s rules still stood, and was adjusting well to not being the baby. The girls were all usually pretty well behaved.

Stephanie – Helping Michelle As A Roommate:

I was happy by now with Michelle as a roommate; she really did look up to me for everything. My being a leader helped a lot.

She wasn't getting up super early anymore; she had a longer day. However, she would lay awake at night at times, and we'd talk a bit.

This is when I really learned how fun it was to have someone look up to me. She had a nightmare after we'd scared her when she snuck out, and she came to me. I was amazed! I assured her I'd be there for her, and told her she should use her brain and pretend I was there for her if she was scared. It worked.

It was harder when she came to me because D.J. really scolded her, but by comforting all sorts of things, I really grew as a PA. But, more importantly, I was a big sister, and like most preteens before Middle School, I was confident of my role in the world. People have to learn things don't have to change as they get older. If D.J. had been more proactive, I'd have stayed interested in this. Instead, I strayed a bit before I returned, after Michelle's accident, to that fun-loving attitude I had here.

5-15 Play It Again, Jess Jan. 6, 1992

Becky – Fri., Jan. 10 – Another gig ends:

The airport lounge was no more. Okay, it was there, but Jesse's gig wasn't. He quickly missed the time with me. He tried it for a week, but our lounge players didn't make tons of money. Plus, he never could play in an elevator. Steph kidded him about when she'd play house and "punish" him by making him sing Barry Manilow. Jesse went back a few times, but unlike the Elvis gig he had till he broke his arms, this wasn't a real interest. He'd started to learn when to stop, but it would still be a slow process.

Danny – Jan. 31 – Spelling, and good winners:

Steph would have been a better loser, but for her title in baseball, the only time her team won the title, and the fact she was just way too hard on herself, as usual.

She was more than happy to congratulate the winner of the school spelling bee later. Harry was in the top ten in the national spelling bee. Stephanie was the best in her school next year, but lost in the city-wide bee the morning of February 6, before Jesse's graduation. I kidded her that I'd take her to Disneyworld even if she lost; most sports stars have to win a title to go. That city-wide one was the furthest she ever went in that.

5-16 Crushed Fri. Jan. 17, 1992
5-17 Spellbound Jan. 27-31, 1992

D.J. – Feb. 3 – Stephanie's PA duties and dilemma:

"Deej, can we talk?" Stephanie asked, entering my room this evening. We sat; I could tell something big was on her mind. "You know, Deej, I'm amazed at how well you've handled things like the samples, and Michelle sneaking out."

"Thanks, Steph. Dad waited so long, I knew it would be rough." Things had gone well lately with her, so I presumed this had to do with her leadership in school. It did.

"You know what, though, Deej? One of the reasons I can do what I do with the school is seeing you with Michelle. You inspire me."

I beamed. I wished later I'd done a lot more; there was so much I could have. But, little comments like that still came, because of what I did. It made all my work with Michelle worthwhile. "You don't know how good it feels to hear that."

"At first, it was tough to imagine punishing a kid. I'm thankful Michelle always behaves well at school. But, I really like helping everyone as a PA." Stephanie sighed, disliking the thought as she continued. "I know some kids hit playfully. But, to punish, I don't know if I could. I'd never hit even for fun. Mom and Dad never considered it. How did you handle it when you brought it up with Michelle?"

"It was really hard," I said, my voice cracking slightly. "Dr. Landress says it's not too scary for her, the way we've talked. I still fretted a bit, though. I remind myself she loves me and she knows I love her. I make myself be in control, even if I have to lecture, so she can't think I'm just mad at the world. With any discipline, it has to be helping, so they know to count on you for help otherwise."

Stephanie nodded slowly. "I guess it's like that mnemonic - 'The principal is your pal.'" I agreed. "After all, I'm a 'pal,' not a 'ple.' Could you believe Kimmy yesterday?" she asked, grinning broadly. "She thought the head of a school was a principle, spelled the other way. Then, when I reminded her of the saying, she said she thought it was 'The principal is your ple,' and asked what a 'ple' was."

We were laughing. I was grateful to have my mind on humorous subjects. "Yes, that was…strange. Look, why not go to the guy whose childhood makes Michelle seem like an angel." We chuckled. "I'm sure Uncle Jesse has some insight."

"Thanks, Deej. I'll ask him. It's not a problem yet; they've worked me into a PA position gradually, to see how much I can handle, especially with discipline. But, it will be," she said confidently, knowing she could meet the challenge. "I don't want to just do it part way. I'd like to do all they do in Australia." I told her I knew she could.

Jesse – On the PA position being official, how it worked:

We were in a very liberal region. Schools often experimented; they weren't tied to one manner of education. So, when Steph started to help and enjoyed it, they looked into seeing if a PA would be viable in an American school.

A PA let teachers teach, and lets the principal have time for administrative duties. It's based on the notion that kids accept discipline more readily from and are more comfortable talking to other kids; they have them in Australia and Britain.

That's why Joey said the next kid to make noise would go to the principal's office, rather than have the next one sit in the hall or write sentences like in a normal school, and sent her without a note.[286] The PA handled all those things. It also helped for times like when Charles told about his dad but never confided in an adult.[287] Such girls handle these things quite often in places where they have them.

This wasn't the only thing that helped Dr. Landress decide at her last checkup that Steph could handle it. She not only had the drive, but it was like a school project. She didn't have to take it home with her. He just said to make sure she had a great support system, like the ones where they have them, and we did.

With Steph having her office now and the school officially experimenting with a

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[286] "To Joey, With Love," especially since Joey knew the principal was too busy trying to figure out how to function with the flu epidemic, mere minutes after class started. Making the next one who peeped sit outside wouldn't have been hard. Even if he'd have had trouble making one write sentences or stay in from recess he'd have made one sit outside for a five minutes or so timeout rather than bother the principal. He didn't know it would be Michelle, so that didn't enter into it.

[287] "Silence Is Not Golden" – usually a kid will not tell a kid he hardly knows, even if she promises not to tell anyone, and yet not tell an adult. If she was like an authority figure, it would make more sense.

Principal's Assistant position - one that would become permanent later - she had more responsibility, and more things to consider. She wouldn't just handle little things like what I mentioned, she had the option of handling the real discipline problems. Steph wanted to; and, we figured she could.

If it wasn't a big problem, Steph - and from what we learned, Australian PA's – could have kids come on their own with no note. In a normal school, the teacher makes one who acts up, or talks, or whatever, sit outside the room, stay in from recess, or write sentences, all of which worked with most smaller problems.

When Steph disciplined, of course, it could mean more than lecturing, timeouts - then or after school - or inside recess or sentences. She asked how I felt about a number of things, because she knew most of my history. I wasn't one the teacher could tell to walk to the principal; they'd take me there in case I considered leaving. And, if a teacher took a kid to the PA for a behavior problem, she'd have to be a lot tougher.

I wasn't comfortable talking about what the principal had to do a few times. I told Stephanie if she considered hitting, it should be something where nothing else worked, but that she should try not to do it.

Finally, she decided she'd do it as a last resort, but only with a hand and not as much on purpose as she would be reacting to a kid cursing out a teacher, for instance, or doing something really mean. She'd always remain in control of herself - and usually her lectures were plenty. She could get quite excited, and therefore quite loud. However, she'd never be rash when it came to this.

It sounded fair, a good, healthy balance. She might deal with some big bullies, after all. She had the backing of the principal and the school board, which was vital.

Becky – Helping the School:

Stephanie was such a great help in school; it made us all so proud. She limited herself to one light reaction fwap - well, if some really big kids did something really mean she might do more. Even with that, she'd consult with the principal and teachers.

It should be noted that they would have stopped allowing hitting in the schools altogether were it not for the idea that maybe this would work and an adult wouldn't have to, but after 2000 they stopped it for a while. However, after lots of discipline problems they allowed it again in rare circumstances a decade later.

Behavior improved noticeably among the students, just like Michelle's. She could get wild at home, but always behaved well at school. As for the others, Steph could get pretty tough and loud. And, they learned to avoid Mount Stephanie's lectures.

While Steph tried to be a great encouragement and build positive self-esteem, she wasn't afraid to discipline. Some adults were too soft, not wanting to take a stand on an absolute right and wrong. What Steph did was like in one-room schoolhouses, where older kids helped keep younger ones in line. My grandparents knew about that.

Joey – Cartoons bringing a lighter moment:

I hated the thought of hitting, and so did Steph. She was extra thankful Michelle was always so good in school, though she'd be Danny's responsibility if things got bad.

I assured Steph she didn't have to hurt anyone much even at the worst. "You know how stars are the universal symbol for pain in cartoons and comics? There's only one or two where Dennis the Menace ever got spanked, and there are no stars."

Kimmy overheard while looking at a magazine on our coffee table. “If I were a cartoon, my eyes would have turned into hearts after seeing this guy.”

“Yeah, and every time you talk, a dunce cap would appear above your head,” Steph kidded, thankful for the chance to laugh.

5-20 Driving Miss D.J. Feb. 22, 1992

Stephanie – Feb. 26 – First time with toughest task as PA

I’d only do what I did today as PA a dozen times or so. The principal decided last week, after consulting with everyone, to let me handle the worst cases as PA.

I’d consulted with him on a few cases, including the kid I had sent to me today. Aunt Becky said I’d handled it just like the best principals she’d had or heard about back in Nebraska. That only helped me feel a little better.

We’d gotten home from school at the same time as D.J.; Aunt Becky had come to be with their boys, and take Michelle back to the station to see Ranger Joe. I didn’t want to say anything in front of everyone, but Michelle blurted, “Some fifth grader put a tack on a kid’s chair, an’ got nasty with a teacher. Stephanie smacked him.”

Uncle Jesse spouted, “Man; that tack part’s something even I never did.”

“How do you feel?” Aunt Becky asked as she came over to me.

“Okay, I guess,” I said evenly as I plopped my backpack on the table. “It didn’t hurt much, if at all. Still, I didn’t like doing it, but our principal said this was one of the worst kids. I knew the principal would have, so I just didn’t listen to that voice inside saying to use my words.” Aunt Becky told me about schools where she grew up. “I know, Aunt Becky. It’s just sad when talking and stuff don’t work.”

D.J. clearly disliked the discussion; it reminded her of last year’s struggles with Michelle. Still, she tried to help. “Steph, nobody should like to discipline.”

“Yeah, and you did the right thing, Steph. You gotta talk with kids, and try to work things out, but a kid like that, if he don’t learn now, he’s askin’ for trouble,” Uncle Jesse said. “A kid can get hurt real bad in their spine if they sit on a tack!”

“Thanks, Uncle Jesse. I just did it once as a reaction. I gave him a chance before,” I considered aloud, my face brightening a little. “He’s had lots of chances. And, he seemed to learn after we talked then, after that.”

Aunt Becky added, “D.J.’s right. You’ve got a good heart. You want to help everyone get along. Some kids just make that hard. So, you have to get kind of blunt talking with them, or take some privilege away or give timeout. Or, a few times, you might have to do what you did today. Still sure you can handle it?”

‘Yeah, I’m sure,” I said instantly and with certainty, a smile crossing my face. “It is tough being a leader. But, it’s a lot of fun. I’m glad I have the chance to do it.”

“There’s no job where you’re gonna like every part of it,” Uncle Jesse said. “Even music, I don’t like pressure or writer’s block. But, music’s something I love. If you really love being a positive influence, and helping kids learn and feel better, you’ll be able to shake off the tough times. It’ll all be worth it in the end.”

“Thanks, Uncle Jesse.” We hugged, and I felt as good as ever. With help like I had, I could get through anything. Helping like I did was very rewarding.

He was right. I made a difference. I might get a tad flustered, or joke around a bit, though I tried not to, it was mostly the Jennifers. But, that’s okay; I was human. I thought just like D.J. had when talking with Mom years earlier. Still, the fact even I thought of it

as appropriate frustrated her a bit, making her edgier for a few days.[288]

5-21 Yours, Mine and Ours Feb. 28, 1992

Jesse - Mon., Mar. 1 – D.J. helps with guest speaker, celebrities in the area:

Today, D.J.'s high school Student Council sponsored Linda Bove – the librarian on Sesame Street – as a speaker. They'd pushed for the school to get someone. They thought they could get her, and D.J. helped write a very nice letter telling her about their school and so on. Ms. Bove really motivated some to succeed. She also inspired them to interact with the few mostly deaf, blind, or other challenged students, at least to talk to them, and even to invite a few on dates.

Our part of the country had more celebrities than most, of course. Danny and Becky's show helped with some, though not her. They had lame guests sometimes, all shows do at times. But, once in a while, they found a really great one. Families without someone in the media don't get the opportunities we did.

Of course, not all in the media have those chances. But we always taught the girls that if you present a positive image, you're nice to your guests, and you don't act pushy, the nicer ones, if they have time, will help. That's why the Beach Boys were willing to hang out with us, for instance. They liked Danny when they met him before they came.

Becky – Mar. 12 - Premature babies, and introducing the boys to solids:

Today was the boys' four month birthday. Normally, we'd consider introducing them to solids; well, okay, that squishy stuff you start with. Milk or formula provides most nutrition till about six months. If they were full term, Jesse might have tried early. But, they weren't; they were a month early. They were spared the worst effects, though. Unlike some preemies, they didn't need a few extra days in the hospital.

Preemies are judged from their due date, not the birth date, in calculating weight and other important things. They can catch up fast, of course. Ours did, though they didn't develop as fast as some in a few things. For example, they waited till about their fourth birthdays before really exploding verbally.

We were told not to think of solids till four months after their due date, since they were premature. We began in April. We knew one might - he seemed interested in what we ate, he held his head up, and so on. Even then, the experiment only partly worked at first, though they both ate when Kimmy babysat and Steph fed them.[289]

They were still mostly on milk. That good nutrition really helped when it came to later abilities. Still, Jesse thought I was nuts in how I babied them, till one caught his first cold. To get back at him for how insistent he was about them growing fast, Joey and I combined to trick Jesse into thinking they were crawling.[290]

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[288] Your "pen pal" made a (rather bad?) joke about why she was embarrassed when they were out, normal frustration that disappeared in a day or two; real life teens aren't that embarrassed about family.

[289] "Five's A Crowd," which shows why that episode must be later.

[290] Crawling at the time of "The Trouble With Danny" is impossible even for full-term babies. Unlike other episodes, though, this can't be moved forward. It wouldn't be spring cleaning, which is in late March in "Goodbye, Mr. Bear," and would be late April at the latest. The twins had to start crawling at 6-8 months at the earliest, when D.J. left for Spain; some babies roll or scoot, but it's still the same. So, Joey played a joke, which is very much like him. Writers wanted to fast forward a bit to explain new, older looking babies next year, and would have a couple things happen next year because of stages the actors were going through, but as mentioned, the actor is not the character.

Stephanie – Sat., Mar. 28 – Danny not as obsessed, still careful with baseball:

Thankfully, Dad realized he'd reverted back to his most obsessed ways, because Vicki was on his mind. Last year, he was more worried about my pitching arm.

He wouldn't get as obsessed with cleaning anymore, but he'd always love doing it; he just wouldn't force others to share his love for it.[291]

However, he was still pretty careful. Last year, he showed me how to ice my arm down after every game, and he did it again here, our first of the season. Our league had a fall season, too, but I was always busy with dance then. Especially last year, though I wouldn't be as much from now on. My arm was never that sore, because I threw mostly knuckleballs, but I still did it, because it did help when I couldn't control it as well and threw more fastballs; I had a pretty good arm for my age.

Joey – Wed., Apr. 1 – Jokes in the Tanner House:

Michelle wanted to pull jokes like me, like she'd wanted to tell them earlier. By fourth grade, she pulled jokes on her own, but never went too far.[292]

I had permission for little practical jokes, even when it wasn't April first.[293] If I used the bucket above the door, it was always where it was easy to clean, and I wiped it up. I involved others, like having strings and such to make it look like one of the twins was crawling, but that was too complex for Michelle yet.

For now, with Michelle wanting me to teach her to be funny, I gave her some ideas. I figured she'd pull simple, controlled ones like me. However, she was too wound up, and D.J. hollered after she threw a water balloon at her in her room. Danny sent her to her room for 10 minutes, which worked great. She settled down really well. After that, we told her she could only do supervised April Fools' jokes till she matured. She obeyed. Danny was finally taking the doctor's advice, and was totally consistent.

Danny – Apr. 2 – The Gumby incident:[294]

Today, Michelle stuck her Gumby action figure into the microwave and turning it on. No fire resulted, thankfully, but the surge damaged electrical stuff.

When I came down, Jesse was spraying the fire extinguisher into a big cloud of smoke that had been a Gumby figure as I came downstairs. Michelle was hiding under the table with Comet because of big sparks in the microwave.

I had to clean the mess. It made such an incredible mess in the microwave, the way Gumby exploded. The shock meant I needed D.J.'s and the guys' help figuring out

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[291] He still loves cleaning - he vacuums the steps every day ("Michelle Rides Again 2"), ties Steph's shoes ("Come Fly With Me") and wonders about a character's favorite fabric softener ("Radio Days.") He got help to stop overly obsessive urges, but let go of common ones slowly, if at all.

[292] Book, "April Fools" – Nowhere else in books is interest shown, but is in "Crushed." Classmate in book is new, and never there again, but can easily be in her TV Universe class in fourth grade. No room in Book Universe timeline. Interest in such jokes would die down by teen years.

[293] "Love On The Rocks"

[294] "Smash Club: The Next Generation" - she was "depressed" after learning Gumby wasn't microwave safe. Surges likely with older electricity. It's not mentioned how bad the damage was but it would be quite scary, and could account for girls being a bit more scared of Wendy's souvenir in "No More Monkey Business." Right before she runs away is seen as the most likely time by almost all.

how to punish. By now, I accepted that I missed Pam and would be helped by D.J.'s input, as well as Jesse's and Joey's. By trusting her to know what Pam might have done, I was doing what I should have done when Michelle was two.

I grounded Michelle till spring break, a week and a day away. No TV, videos, etc. was an added, automatic consequence since lots of things would take a while to get fixed, anyway, with the electrical surges. Michelle got no allowance for a while, either, and no dessert for almost two weeks; till Jesse's birthday.

I could have kept her from going anywhere for two weeks. I didn't want her to miss out on spring break, though. Longer without sweets was fair, like when I let D.J. trade time grounded for something else to go to the concert. I also gave chores, but we had very few to give, with all the spring cleaning we'd just done.

I sent Michelle up for a bath and straight to bed, since it was almost bath time anyway. D.J. also spoke firmly yet lovingly while she got her bath. I eventually had her clean some after her bath, as well.

Jesse took her to tour the fire station the next day, to show her what could have happened. She saw what dangers can come from playing with electrical stuff. He got the state of the art recording equipment he always wanted, too.[295]

D.J. was really proud of how I handled this. Jesse was, too. Joey gave me a speech that made it sound like I'd won the Super Bowl. I was tempted to look for a camera and shout that I was going to Disneyland, like in the ads.

D.J. – Michelle felt bad, learned lesson well:

Michelle felt really bad. One peek at that smoke, and the smoke alarm's sound, told her she was in big trouble. She had no clue what would happen, though. She'd learned mud can be baked for homes, and wanted to see what her Gumby would be like baked. She knew not to touch the oven, so she tried the microwave.

I was glad Dad let me handle part. He really is super; he just needed lots of help and understanding. He wasn't totally comfortable without Mom for years.

Michelle was very remorseful. She knew she'd been really bad. She wasn't scared when I went up there, but she knew I'd be mad. She'd obey our limits, so the story of the princesses never got mentioned. I was elated; I figured we were over that for good.

Becky – Apr. 3 – Fire drill practice, new appliances:

Going to the fire station did wonders, too. Lots of stuff got damaged, but at least we were okay, and even got to practice running down for fire drills, like we'd done a few times. Danny looked for new appliances that evening – with him, they had to look the same as the old. The TV - and other stuff that took a few days to fix or replace - sat around till early next week. Michelle was very careful around appliances for a while.

Max:

I remember Dad taking us there a few times for fun. It showed how Mom learned

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[295] The equipment clearly looks different from "The King and I," months ago. It's debatable whether it's the same as in "Crushed" and "Spellbound," but while that in "Spellbound" has sound effects, the "whole band" isn't shown. Also, Michelle would have wandered down and discovered it before if it was new, so there had to be some difference by "The Devil Made Me Do It." If there was no difference, that just means that Jesse got the top of the line by "Crushed," and it would still be under warrantee so he could get it replaced with a similar model later.

early to talk it out, work it out, and hug it out. Dad, too; trips like this inspired him to be a fireman. Both knew how important it was to think, and tell us what would happen; Mom from how Grandpa Danny struggled. That probably made her a bit tough at times.

5-18 Too Much Monkey Business	Apr. 4, 1992
5-19 The Devil Made Me Do It	Apr. 11, 1992

Jesse – Sat., Apr. 11 – Michelle's misbehavior, running away:[296]

Michelle was just off being grounded because of Gumby today. Her "no TV" punishment had just ended. She knew if she did something wrong today, she'd face a loss of a privilege along with timeout; direct disobedience meant no going out today.

I played with her and Teddy, then we had lunch and I came down to work. Once I was done, she disobeyed by messing with my new stuff. Danny sent her to her room for the usual 10 minutes for disobeying, and took away her TV/videos privilege for that day. She was grounded, too, which always meant not going anywhere with his rules. She couldn't go with the older girls anyplace. She griped and moped upstairs after she was let out, since she couldn't join Steph, Kimmy, and D.J. when they went out for frozen yogurt. Danny went to walk Comet, and Michelle ran away.

I figured she was sulking in her room, so I was stunned when Danny said she wasn't there. He said he'd checked the whole house before checking in her room – obviously, he checked there last, so he didn't expect her to be there. I just said "she's grounded" because she'd been sulking about being grounded.

She hated going to her room as punishment, but she went for the 15 minutes till supper when we got back. She went happily, stating she loved it. She wasn't just happy to be home. She loved it as an alternative to what D.J. and she would discuss.

D.J. – Strong Lecture, Talk:

This was a perfect example of how I kept Michelle from being far worse by just reacting, not being proactive. Steph and I came in as they were going to get her. Dad told me; I was irate. Kimmy went home, sensing a need for privacy. I felt I had to talk tough, as I'd learned I might have a chance to go to Europe.

When they got back, Dad knew my look. He told her to listen politely. The guys went to the kitchen. I sat on the couch, Michelle's hands in mine, Steph beside me.

Michelle asked, "Are you gonna scare me?" She recalled how we tricked her to

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[296] "The Devil Made Me Do It" is an example of an actress seeming closer to a character than she is.

When not on stage, kids play near the set, and have trailers like adults. Messing with expensive equipment may mean going to their room (trailer) the rest of the workday. While the actresses likely never played with it, the writers kept it simple by having Michelle punished like they would be. However, the character is not the actress. In the "real Tanner universe," Michelle would not be sent all day - no five-year-old would be just for disobeying. 10-15 minutes is punishment to her, especially if denied TV and kept inside, which won't always happen. The Gumby incident explains the restrictions after normal punishment in her room. The other girls' last scene is after Michelle was let out of timeout – they notice nothing wrong when Steph gets her jacket, as they don't expect her to be in her room anymore.

D.J. would help Steph and Kimmy fast. It had to look longer to get them air time in both halves of the episode. Also, they'd play till lunch, then Jesse would resume working. It was later afternoon when Michelle was sent to her room; say 3:30 or 4. Most felt her sisters were back when they learned she was gone. A small minority felt Michelle got sent for 30 minutes or so before supper & was almost out of privileges, again because of Gumby. That is unlikely, however. There's barely enough time, but it's still not normal punishment for mere disobedience, and she stalls over videos, etc. like it's a tad earlier.

teach her how scared everyone felt when she snuck out months earlier.

I was upset, and insisted that Michelle should always obey rules. “This is worse than last time. You should have learned about obeying rules from when you nuked your Gumby,” I declared. “It doesn’t matter if you didn’t break anything this time; we need to have a serious talk!” Steph helped as I scolded sharply. My lecture ended with, “I figured you’d learned your lesson! Yet right after you’re not grounded, you disobey! You weren’t sorry when you knew you were being a bad girl!” To gauge her reaction, I said, “You better start being a good princess right now!”

Michelle looked up with just her eyeballs. “Or you’ll spank me?” she muttered.

“D.J. wouldn’t do it right away,” Stephanie soothed her.

I felt deflated. Her heart was still tender. “Did you think I’d mention that?” She nodded, a tear inching down her face. I picked her up and sat her on my lap facing me. “Steph’s right. I’ll always tell you first if I think about spanking you. But, you were very naughty today.” She nodded sadly. “You still have chores as punishment. Daddy took TV and videos away today since you didn’t learn from that Gumby. You still get no sweets. You disobeyed and messed with stuff right after you were done being punished.” They’d talk about running away, so I emphasized firmly, “With how badly you’ve behaved, and how many privileges you’ve lost, if you disobey rules or punishments once more today, we will have a very serious talk about how I might have to do it.”

Michelle sniffled and hugged me tightly, like she’d done to Dad after that suitcase trick. She wiped a tear. “I’ll be good, D.J,” she pledged wholeheartedly. And, she was. “I’m glad you tell me when you think about it,” she said thankfully as we hugged.

I looked her in the eye, knowing even more I’d only have to hurt her feelings. She was timid, so she tried hard to avoid any possibility of getting hurt.[297]

“Of course. I know you, and how to handle you so you‘ll be good.” She smiled gratefully, as I held her in my lap. “Normally, when you’re naughty, you get yelled at or sent to your room. You get chores, lose a privilege, get grounded, whatever’s needed. If nothing worked, and you kept disobeying, especially avoiding punishment, we’d have a serious talk about it,” I said firmly. “Then, your behavior would improve and stay improved, so I wouldn’t have to do it. Right?” I asked confidently

She grinned. “I like being a good girl!” I was so glad I didn’t end up doing it.

Dad and Uncle Jesse came back in once Steph called them in. “D.J. loves you very much,” Dad said as Uncle Jesse picked up the suitcase and went toward the stairs. “She just wants you to control those impulses and obey the rules.”

“I know, Daddy, I’m sorry.”

“D.J. and I talked about this. No TV or videos for a week. You will obey our punishments, right?” Dad asked. She agreed strongly. “Good. Because, I know you can be a very good girl, and you want to be,” Dad encouraged her.

“You bet,” Michelle declared.

Dad felt sad. He wouldn’t be totally obsessed with cleaning now, but he wished he had more chores to give Michelle so I might not have had to bring that up.

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[297] “Easy Rider,” lots of padding when she tries to ride, & light sting from disinfectant stung “a lot,” much more than D.J.’s light “fwaps” would. Plus, she’s upset Joey “let her” fall, so doesn’t like anyone “letting her” get hurt. She’s afraid of Joey’s “mad” game face in “Nice Guys Finish First.” Plus, she doesn’t climb out of her crib till 34 months (“Granny Tanny”), only likely if naturally timid.

Stephanie – Comforting her:

Uncle Jesse went up and talked with her. Dad knew it was too easy to misbehave out of boredom. She didn't leave the room, but even with only 15 minutes till supper, he and I brought her photo albums to put stuff in; we'd come in as she was unpacking her suitcase. Michelle told me once Dad left that she'd thought for a second about sneaking out, but vehemently refused.

"I'm glad you like being good," I said. As I sat, I sensed she needed a little loving, and invited her to climb into my lap. She did, and we cuddled.

"I know I should. But, hearing 'always be good' can get on my nerves," she confessed. I said I was glad she listened anyway. Then, she asked, "Did the bad princess get more slaps 'cause she was badder? You gave that kid with the tack one."

She considered how D.J.'s story said it was several. I felt like I was in Becky's area years ago, comforting like this. I didn't like it, but Michelle was okay with it. A few times she'd played with dolls like that chimp had hit. So I accepted it.

"In D.J.'s story, the queen is number one boss, so she can give more. But, the queen still loves the bad princess with all her heart. It depends on how big the kid is and how sensitive. I'd give a small kid a lot less of a fwap than a big one." I never did it to a kid below third grade. "D.J. would only do what she thought you needed her to do to get through to your heart. It's no fun to think about, huh?" She shook her head. "You know D.J. loves you, right?" Michelle grinned broadly; she was sure. "Good. D.J. hates thinking about it. So do I. You can come to me, like other times she's yelled. But, D.J. would let you cry with her, too. I know you'll be good so it won't happen, though. You like being good," I finished confidently.

She strongly agreed. She'd seen rare times in Joey's comic strips, and presumed crying was a logical result. As hoped, since D.J. would only hurt feelings, Michelle focused on how sad she'd be. Good thing, too; I'd slipped and said "fwap."

Michelle muttered contentedly, "D.J. would know how to get to my heart." She didn't know why, but reasoned that there was a difference between how a PA did it and a parent-like figure. I hadn't totally answered her question, but I was smart enough to know she didn't need a ramble about how different families disciplined different ways. I knew the important thing was that she knew the queen would always love the bad princess with all her heart. At her age, all that mattered was that she had faith that loving figure would be good to her. She wouldn't dare test it. But, a few nights later, she was awake yet as I went to bed, and she said a part of her thought maybe D.J. would know it didn't have to hurt more than her feelings. I just repeated what I said here.

"Yeah, she'd know just how to get to your heart, so it's tender and you listen." It wasn't threatened here; Michelle behaved better than the other time. Still, as a precaution, I added, "Better be good and not test things, huh?" She agreed; she didn't even want D.J. to mention it, and she didn't. She knew even fwaps wouldn't feel good.

Dad came up and ate supper with her. We all encouraged her talking about how good she could be. Michelle waited till Uncle Jesse's birthday, and only had one piece of birthday cake, like she was told. However, she tested a bit then.

Jesse – Thu., Apr. 16 – One of Those "Famous Talks":

I saw Michelle pick up the TV remote out of the corner of my eye. She gave me one of those ornery looks; I don't know if that and the excitement of my birthday was

why, but she'd had a big piece of cake. She still couldn't watch TV till the weekend.

I rushed up and tickled her. "What should we watch?" she asked, giggling and turning on the TV. I quickly turned it off. "You must want to watch something."

"Hey, munchkin, listen." I sat the remote on the table, and cuddled her in my lap. With it off, she gave me her undivided attention. "Remember how I told you I was real wild when I was a kid, and how wrong I was for doin' that stuff?"

"Yes, I do. I'm very proud of you for being good," she said happily, copying us.

"Well, there's stuff I wanted to do, but I didn't. You know why?" Michelle shook her head. "It was your mother; my big sister, Pam." Michelle grinned; she loved stories about Pam. "Pam told me I could get away with stuff from our Mom and Dad, but I'd never be able to fool her. She'd always find out. Sound like someone you know?"

"You mean D.J.?" she asked, embarrassed.

"Yep. Your mom let me get away with little stuff, but if I ever did something mean or destructive, she didn't say what she'd do. I wasn't always the best. But, I never did any stuff that'd make her come after me. Like, once I did this dumb motorcycle stunt, she screamed her head off, and said I better never do that again. I made sure I didn't!"

I could almost see the wheels spinning in Michelle's mind. Finally, she dared to ask in a sad voice, "Was she gonna spank you?"

"Come on, munchkin, I was grown by then," I said, laughing if off. "The point is, I knew my boundaries. I obeyed, because I knew she was trying to make me do what was right, even if I didn't want to accept it. That's just what D.J.'s doing with you."

Michelle looked pensive as she thought about me and, even more, D.J.. "If she really thought you needed it, she would have."

"Just like D.J., huh?" Michelle nodded solemnly; she could tell it hurt me just to say that; I couldn't stand to say the word. I could see why she figured it was the same, we both felt sad about how rebellious we'd been. "You know, munchkin, if you really want to be like your Uncle J., listen to your big sister! And, when she sets limits and tells you to behave so you learn, you obey," I said in my most authoritative voice. "Capiche?"

"Capiche," she said as we hugged.

Becky – What Feels Good:

What feels good isn't always wrong, but it isn't always right, either. Michelle knew she couldn't just do what she wanted.

There is an in between, which was sometimes hard for Jesse to see. I could accept some wildness, but he had to mature before I'd marry him. Thankfully, he did, and we were always very happy. Still, at times he didn't realize the message he was sending.

Basing decisions totally on feelings makes no sense, anyway, because feelings change. Just like you love chocolate, then you eat so much you've got a tummyache; you sure don't want any more then. Decisions need to be based on right and wrong; that's what we learned all the time back in Nebraska.

Thankfully, D.J. taught that in a firm, yet loving, way. Jesse and Michelle told her about their talk. D.J. didn't scold her, just told her she was glad Michelle was being good. Michelle was starting to realize she didn't have to do what she felt like – to be like Jesse, as she put it - and that she could get in really big trouble with D.J. if she kept it up.

And yet, Danny's was her ultimate authority. She'd still test stuff as kids do, but he just had to keep being loving, consistent, and firm, and everything would be okay.

Michelle – Apr. 24 – Obeying Better:

D.J. told Kimmy to play with me if she wouldn't watch the twins. We had fun. D.J. knew Kimmy and Steph could co-operate now, though they still had fun teasing, as they always did, because it was always just for laughs.[298]

Otherwise, I mostly played nicely with Comet. I knew Steph was watching. It helped when she made me the special helper with Comet that night.

I'd always played well on my own. Problems came if I had bad ideas. D.J. always knew how to handle me, though. I still needed to see her as the ultimate rule giver, because I remembered when she was my only boss.

Still, I knew Dad was boss. I was just testing the rules like most kids do. I was more ornery because of who I patterned myself after. As much as I enjoyed my Honeybee friends, I really wanted to be like Uncle Jesse. I thought he was the coolest person ever. I couldn't see any fault in him.

Dad recognized this, but instead of trying to get Uncle Jesse to change, he ignored misbehavior if it came to a conflict between them. I learned to play them off each other

So, my early years were like Uncle Jesse's. D.J. was the one who always got me to behave if she tried hard enough, just like Mom with Uncle Jesse. D.J. hadn't been proactive, but she was more like Mom than any of us realized.

D.J. – Apr. 25 – Michelle's Conscience:

Michelle crawled in bed with me at about 2 AM. "I thought about trying to get away with stuff 'cause Kimmy's dumb. But, I didn't. You might be mad." I told her I was proud of her for obeying Dad's rules. "You should go on 'Rugrats' and make Angelica behave." Michelle had tried and disliked the Nickelodeon cartoon. Angelica was far bossier than Michelle could ever be. One of the things she hated most was that Angelica was so rude to babies. That time with Nicky and Alex, she let them do stuff, or asked nicely, and had patience with them; she wasn't too bossy.[299]

"I'm glad you don't like thinking about kids like that."

"I don't like how she likes being bad. They should have a cartoon where every minute is you yelling or her in the corner." A couple years later, Michelle wrote to them after Aunt Becky encouraged her. She said Angelica's parents had to sit her in the corner for bad stuff, because, in her words, "If I acted like Angelica, I'd be in big, big, big trouble with my big sister!" They did with the comic strip, at least.

"I'm so proud. You know how to behave, and you do," I said cheerfully. "I'd have to be pretty tough on Angelica, huh?"

As we discussed how Michelle thought I'd handle a "very, very, bad" Angelica, Michelle showed she'd constructed her own rules. Hers were similar to ours, including if I'd spank, but she had subtle differences, like saying Angelica would get more "because she's badder" – thinking of the number, not how it would hurt. So, she didn't just parrot us. She showed empathy, too, when saying I'd have to spank Angelica. I sensed Michelle hated even the thought of hurting a cartoon, let alone a person.

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[298] "The Prying Game," Kimmy says she misses when they joked like this, plus, as shown, how each cares deep down (Kimmy backing off at times, Steph not telling what D.J. wrote, etc.)

[299] "Smash Club: The Next Generation," where even when they get the wrong fruit – expected with such a young child – she is very patient with them.

"I'm glad you don't like the thought. I don't either," I said forlornly. I wasn't surprised it was brought up, with the recent reminder. It was still sad, though, especially because Angelica seemed to like being bad; she wasn't just mean. The only good part was, at age three light fwaps should have worked even on Angelica, though Michelle didn't know how gentle I'd be. I emphasized that it was the feelings that would hurt the most. "It'd break her heart, huh?"

"She'd know you love her. But, she'd be so sad. She would cry her eyes out."

Michelle thought about how she'd react, too. She rarely cried, but sensed this was a lot worse than being yelled at or sent to one's room.

"Let's say that's how the story ends," I said, encouraging her good points. "I try everything else first. I spank Angelica just enough to make her heart tender. Then, she starts to be nice, and follows the rules, and accepts timeout or other punishment if she fails, so I never have to spank Angelica again. She just needs to learn through love to be good. Just like we've always taught you."

"I love you, D.J.." We embraced and smiled broadly at each other for a moment. I sensed in her look how much she cared, and how she knew I cared so much; how good I was to her; so much that probably couldn't have been put into words right then. Then, Michelle slowly drifted off to sleep with me rubbing her back.

I considered the girl next to me, and wondered if I'd overreacted. Like the others, I sorely wished we'd never had to mention spanking. She knew only I'd do it, but it was frustrating. However, I knew if she knew my last resort wouldn't hurt her bottom there was the slight chance she'd test more to see what it would be like.

Did I overreact? Maybe, but as I heard her gentle snores, I pondered that firm, consistent boundary Dr. Landress mentioned, which she could go up against and yet feel safe and loved. I provided that. Dad did well, but someone had to be there when he was missing Mom. So, I avoided thinking of it at times, like when I didn't write in Spain.

Kimmy – Apr. 26 – Another Gibbler!

You might want a lighter note. So, I'll give you one. I overheard my mom in the bathroom shouting, "Oh yeah, that is how that happens, isn't it!"

I was pretty busy thinking about maybe going to Spain, so I didn't pay too much attention when she and dad started talking aobut age differences, names, and so on. I knew something was up, b ut that was D.J.'s job; she was the repoter.

My mom had been pregnant for a while, but she hadn't thought to investigate – or maybe she didn't want to tell me. That's possible, too. Also, they weren't there much.

Joey – Apr. 27 - Wendy Goes Back to Africa:

Wendy had the chance to go to Africa for the zoo next month. She moved back; she was one of those rugged, outdoors types who tried, but wasn't happy in a city.

Jesse said I was nuts in how I looked for women; he called it a childish version of himself before Pam died. I never looked for common interests - except cartoons. Danny and Jesse said to broaden my horizons, and find a lady with kids, or at least nieces and nephews, who only enjoyed kid stuff because of the children in her life.

I had plenty of chances, but while Danny was comfortable with a divorcee - Linda had only lasted a few dates, but Cindy lasted longer - I wasn't. My parents' marriage ended badly. I didn't want to deal with a situation where there was an ex-spouse in the

picture. Widows were fine, but they were harder to find.

At least Wendy and I had fun together, though I couldn't stand her wild workouts. She even brought that chimp on the Ranger Joe show once, though; the kids loved it..

5-24 Girls Will Be Boys Apr. 27-28, 1992

Stephanie - Michelle and Denise Meet:[300]

Michelle and Denise met formally on Ranger Joe. Denise was in half-day Kindergarten, so they'd only played a little, and never made formal introductions; little kids play like that at times. When they got together next year, they quickly went from hardly knowing each other to best friends.

Denise's attitude improved while I was PA. She found helping others could be lots of fun, just as Michelle would. She didn't improve drastically for a couple years, but eventually she did. Still, she wasn't a big influence on Michelle. Michelle got all her attitude from Uncle Jesse. Michelle influenced Denise just as much, if not more.

Jesse – Forever, Beach Boys Friendship:

My friendship with the Beach Boys was so special. It took a while, but my song netted me quite a bit of publicity. I did a regional tour, with Becky along for some, like last summer. The Beach Boys were elated I didn't doing their song as a rap.

I loved working with them. Our band had made friends that would last a lifetime. It's funny, but I sometimes wonder, would I have gotten that chance if Pam hadn't died? Without them hearing of what I was doing to help that one Thanksgiving, I doubt it. It's amazing how some things just fall into place when you let the Lord work.

Our song did so well, in September the company wanted me to tour Japan for two. The twins were old enough to travel, at ten months, so it was pretty easy. As usual, I let success go to my head, which I didn't like, but I'd dreamed of being a star all my life. I had a choice to make, though, like in a lot of similar situations.

We didn't tour Asia. However, the company had a reserve plan. We asked to booked in the U.S.. It wasn't solid, but it was a lot more fun. We played in nice minor league ball parks and such like last summer. We'd start the last Friday in September, in a benefit show; they knew we might pass up the year-long thing.[301]

I never asked myself what would have happened if I'd done the tour. I was committed to family by this time. Not only that, but the money we earned was close to what it would have been had I gone. I mean, sure, the record people thought it would be great, but a lot of the tour part was getting themselves more exposure.

I briefly thought about touring without Becky or the twins – I mean, ballplayers see more of their teammates than their wives during the season. But, they have home games; they get to sleep at home and see their kids and everything. I couldn't have just flown home once in a while. I still would have missed everything, and even the other band members didn't like the idea.

5-25 Captain Video (1) and

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[300] "The Long Goodbye," the teacher only says who it is so others welcome her; customary with new kids in first grade. It's possible some hadn't met her, but they wouldn't know each other well. The teacher likely presumes most know the face; or, she may have been new and not known Denise was there last year.

[301] "Radio Days." Other gig mentioned in "The House Meets the Mouse," set up after the benefit concert. The record company, as most would, had a backup plan if they didn't accept the Japan tour.

Joey - May 9 - Gifts:

Danny presented me with videos of all my Ranger Joe shows for my birthday. He loved memories. He could obsess over some things, but overall he was a great dad.

"Steph's going to need something to do this summer," he told me, handing me an envelope with tickets. "Michelle's been asking me to let her learn to ride a horse. Steph's best friend, Allie, is moving. I thought you and Steph could take in some Giants games, and even go up to Oakland. I'll take her sometimes, too, Becky will be able to help Michelle a bit before she and Jesse go on tour, too. But, Michelle's younger, and without Pam, I guess I figure she needs more time to bond with me."

He knew he'd have to let D.J. go to Spain. So, he had that all ready.

I was elated. I was like a dad, but I didn't have to worry about being married. I loved sports, though I liked cartoons even more.

Danny had been too excited about Vicki. He wasn't sure how it would turn out, so he'd tried to make things too orderly during spring cleaning. However, by now, he started to let go. Not altogether, though - only enough to make Jesse eat sushi.

Danny – Fri., May 22 – Checkups; Danny Michelle's boss for now:

D.J. needed a checkup before going to Spain. I talked to Dr. Landress about Pam's death. We came up with ways for me not to obsess so much over cleaning, though sadly D.J. being gone caused me to remain overprotective.

He told us Michelle had learned I would handle things. She was confident I was in total charge of her. As we outlined her recent behavior, he said we'd recovered nicely, but D.J. still had to hold the reins a bit. "Michelle sees you as boss, Mr. Tanner, because you've been very consistent. I noticed the trend at her last checkup, and it's continued. Her running away was probably just the Jesse in her personality."

"Probably?" I said, mildly concerned.

"She recalls when you weren't punishing. You've done well enough she's almost certain you're her ultimate authority. Especially over the next couple years, while she's still impressionable, though, you must stay very consistent in discipline so she remains convinced that you are her rightful boss," he cautioned.

He explained further, "She sees D.J. as having authority over her worst behavior. You've handled that very well, D.J.," he complimented. "She listens to you otherwise, as you are kind and all – you're just more than a sister if need be. She has a healthy respect for your 'last resort,' not the unhealthy type of fear. It's like you don't stick your hand in a fire. You don't say you're afraid of the fire, yet you stay away. She isn't sure what it'll be like, so she's timid, and you reassure her well. She knows it's only for very bad boys and girls, and only D.J. would do it," he said, turning to me, then back to D.J.. "And, D.J., she senses you'd do it out of love, to help her. Her 'Rugrats' idea was a sign of that, I think. It's not too harsh, so she's comfortable imagining it in a story, which is normal for this age. As you say, you know what Michelle needs, D.J., like any good parent knows each individual child. She's remorseful, but not humiliated. She knows you'll do what you say, D.J.. That's vital with any discipline.

"If you like, Mr. Tanner, we can discuss Michelle's behavior further, but that shouldn't be necessary. It sounds like there has been major improvement in the last year plus," he finished with a smile. "Remain consistent and you should be home free."

Dr. Landress – How Michelle Was Learning Boundaries:

All children test limits, some more than others. The amount depends on their personality – how strong is their will, how likely to want to obey, and so on – and what they get used to growing up.

Michelle had boundaries in her mind, which is crucial, by the time Mr. Tanner started punishing. The vast majority had been set by D.J, and she'd learned the rules well. She needed to see that their dad would hold her to those same boundaries.

Michelle would have tested less, but his ignoring the samples, and Joey saying she could disobey rules, hindered things. So, she tested for consistency till D.J.'s talk. She learned her biggest problem would be losing all her privileges. She didn't get near that for over a year; once she did, she knew when to stop.

To compound matters, Jesse was her role model. His attitude was, "I'll do what I feel like." But, while Michelle was influenced quite a bit by Jesse as a mother figure, she had a sensitive part that sought to avoid anything that could hurt. She'd much rather follow her dad's rules. They were consistent now, so she behaved better again. As long as he kept them that way, they'd have no huge problems.

Sadly, he would not be totally consistent. It still could have worked, but he made a promise that made his boundary seem nonexistent. That made her test till she got to D.J.'s tougher one. Otherwise, his easier one would have been perfect – it was after that.

Stephanie - June 2, 1992 – Losing Her Best Friend:

This was it. Allie was moving; her dad found work in North Carolina last month. Luckily, Allie's family could stay here till they sold their house a couple weeks ago.

Losing Allie was rough. Being pen pals wouldn't be the same. We'd been through so much. I'd had my first sleepover without D.J. or a grownup at her house soon after I turned nine; I'd tried, but got scared and called to come home a year earlier. That's better than D.J. – Dad asked her to come home because he was scared, though Mom talked him into letting D.J. go back to Kimmy's, one of the first nights they lived next door. Allie was one of few who hadn't teased Walter that time, or if she did it was just laughing at him, I don't quite recall.[302] So, Allie would have prevented most of my wilder stunts. Her steadying influence kept me from getting too carried away most times.

At least D.J. was here. Dad was with Michelle at the stables. He'd be back later for me. He'd offered to give me lessons, in fact, but I declined. I really didn't like horses - they stunk. Of course, Joey and I got to watch the Giants stink instead that year.

D.J. – June 3 - Saying goodbye to Eddie: [303]

In retrospect, I had too little time for volunteering at the nursing home, just as I had for my job. It's just that the volunteering wasn't as time consuming, and therefore my grades didn't suffer. So, I kept at it some. I would have been better off being proactive and just spending time with family, but I had to go with what we had now.

We had a fun picnic with Eddie at our home, but he was slipping more. It was very depressing, much more so for his only daughter, Gloria. I'd met her over Christmas,

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[302] "Nerd For A Day," Steph says the "whole class" sat with heads down, ignoring fact some hadn't, as kids will do; Walter hadn't and he was in the class! Sleepover story from books.

[303] "The Volunteer"

and she really was thankful that I'd been there for him. But, I'd be in Spain for six weeks, and we all wondered if he'd remember me when I returned.

Of course, even if he didn't, he knew someone was there for him, and that's very important for someone with Alzheimer's. However, it wouldn't be me. My time with him had gotten less and less after those first weeks, especially with helping Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky with the twins. I never would have believed how much time that would take.

Frankly, I wanted to take that time. I wanted to devote my energy to so many things – to be the best – and sometimes it felt like I wasn't doing a good enough job with any of it, because everything I wanted to do took so much time. The year Michelle was really good for a long while, except for those few slips, I got really frustrated being with my family at times because I had half a dozen other commitments that I wanted to be doing, and I wasn't sure how to do them all well.

Now, as I prepared to leave for Spain, I had learned a painful lesson. I couldn't do everything I wanted to do with the level of commitment I felt necessary. That included being with friends, helping in certain places, and so on. I'd do more volunteering in college, but now, as a high school student, I didn't have time. So, Eddie and I said our goodbyes, and we went back to the nursing home, where Gloria was waiting.

"He really did have fun," Gloria told me; she was up visiting from Florida. "He talked about you sometimes."

"It really was a lot of fun. I hope you're not upset that I couldn't be there more."

Gloria didn't mind. "Just the fact someone's with a person like my dad for even a short time is a big help. With my work schedule, it's really hard; we couldn't take care of him the way he needs. It's a painful lesson, I know. But, every bit you do for someone is a blessing. The picnics, the dog show, the Easter service you and your sisters took us to, he got to experience fun things I couldn't give him. My husband and I only have our one boy, so Dad really got to be part of a large family for a while."

We hugged for a moment, unable to say much else. I could feel the love she had, and the sorrow she felt seeing her dad slip away like this. And, in wishing I could help the hurting more, perhaps that's one thing that helped me decide to do what I do.

"You know, Gloria, I heard where this one woman with Alzheimers once, her last year, she'd wake up every day thinking it was her wedding day. I hope Eddie can have the same kind of great memories."

"I'm sure he will. Keep praying; I'll be praying for you and your family, too." We hugged again, and I left to do more fun things.

Jesse – Sushi, and the Smash Club's owner dying:

I stunned Stephanie one day. "Come with Becky and me, Steph, Joey's watching the boys, and your dad's at the stables with Michelle. I have to go eat sushi."

She looked oddly at me, then at Becky. "What kind of bet did you guys make, and how badly did Uncle Jesse lose? He hates sushi."

"It wasn't with me. Believe me, if I'd thought of that, it would have been a great way to get him to see my Aunt Ida over Christmas," Becky teased.

"Well, your dad's been getting over his cleaning obsession pretty well now, at least the part where he makes us do it so much, too. I did some thinking today," I said mournfully. "You know the Smash Club owner, who I said treated me like a son? They had to call a code blue on him today just before I got to the hospital to see him. They

don't think he's gonna make it," I finished sorrowfully.

He hung on three more months. But, the club was closed, and he was in a coma. He'd never totally recover. One more link to my past was gone.

Danny was getting over his obsessions slowly. He had let D.J. go to Spain. He was still wild about cleaning, but not forceful about it. It was time for me to confront my hatred of sushi while thinking. About Steph and friendship. About the fact Becky presumed I'd graduated high school. About everything.

Stephanie – Conversation, as Jesse Starts Liking Sushi:

As Uncle Jesse received his food and began to cut it, I saw one of the Jennifers in my class, and waved her over. "Jennifer, I'd like you to meet my Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky. Guys, this is one of two Jennifers who will be in my class next year."

"Three. One of my friends, another Jennifer, is transferring in," Jennifer said.

"The Jennifers sit at the power table at lunch," I said by way of explanation.

"The power-…Steph, you're a PA, why aren't you there?" Jesse asked, as if it was a rule I should be there. "Not that it matters what others think of you, but still…"

Jennifer laughed. "Us cool kids don't hang out with teachers."

I would have been at that table by sheer force of will normally. It was my nature to sit where I wanted. However, the popular kids didn't want to seen "hanging out with a teacher." I knew it seemed odd to Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky that I wasn't at some "power table." So, I answered absently, "I'll find a way to be cool like you, too," not knowing what that way would be. Jennifer left to join her family.

I can't say Allie would have stopped me from what happened. She might have slowed it down, but it's mostly my troubles with Gia later where Allie would have helped me rein in my emotions.

Anyway, Aunt Becky encouraged me. "Steph, you're special just the way you are. You do a wonderful job with everyone, just like you have with Michelle."

I agreed; it would seem natural for me to help choreograph, and they might not have freed me to do that otherwise. Michelle would listen well then.`[304]

"You're a born leader. Kids look up to you." She turned to Jesse. "You're special the way you are, too." He gazed at her. "I can tell you're wondering about that sushi."

"Well…it's not that bad. I cut into it, and it didn't even scream."

I laughed out loud as I said, "Good thing we didn't bring Joey along."

"Yeah, he'd have the fish saying all sorts of crazy things. But, he's got his cartoon show, and I won't have to work where he can drive me up the wall." He thought for a second. "I'm really proud of how you've kept Michelle from testing stuff at school. I mean, your dad and Joey and I never said 'no' to her rude talk. Yet, you've taught her to be well-mannered, except for one time she said that to a male sub 'cause she thought it was okay for male authority figures. Your talk was really good. Your dad says the teachers said you did a great job of explaining things, not too loud, patient yet very stern, too. She's been real good at school since."

"Sure. I mean, I've always been respectful. Even when I sat with my head down after school, I obeyed. I mean, why not? We have to be nice to others."

Becky smiled proudly. "That's what we like to hear. Disciplining isn't fun. You do it wisely, not too tough but not too lax. You haven't thought of hitting on purpose. The

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[304] "The Play's the Thing," Steph makes Michelle march, & later choreographs.

couple times you did it as a reaction it was just the shock that helped."

Aunt Becky was right. What I did usually worked. Though, the principal handled some at times, if he thought he could relate to them as a father figure.

I'd deal with some of those, too. Michelle's classmate Aaron was one. On the playground, Aaron claimed to know what another kid did that got her in trouble. I called him over and quietly said, "If you ever spread rumors like that, I might have to tell what really happened to your cat. You wouldn't want anyone to know what your mom told me about that, would you?" Aaron never spread rumors again.

"She's right," Jesse said, back in the present. "And, don't worry if you mess up. I know you tend to worry. But, kids will still like you, and believe in you." I was grateful for his encouragement when I got on a plane and was gone for an hour.[305] My cases were more interesting than Aunt Becky's all girls' school would have had. Of course, the all boys school next to it gave them interesting activities together.[306]

He continued. "With the principal backing you up, you keep things under control, and do it on their level so they understand. I wonder what I would have been like with a PA in my school." I smirked at the idea of dealing with a kid like him.

"Don't worry, Uncle Jesse. I'd never go out with one so he can try to influence me," I promised.

We laughed as he continued to enjoy sushi for the first time.

Kimmy:

While other people were dying – and fish, since Hairboy liked sushi now – Jimmy was just starting to live. I was in Spain and hanging around D.J. all the time. So, I didn't get to see Jimmy much. But, after everyone thought my parents were done having kids after me, he had shown up.[307]

Danny – Girls' Activities; Why D.J. Never Wrote from Spain:

I really was proud of Stephanie. She was not only a leader, comforter, and so on, but a great tutor, too, which kept her after school some as well.

Michelle loved horseback riding, just like Stephanie loved the baseball games. We went on a few day trips, too. However, D.J.'s absence meant Michelle tested limits. She learned I'd enforce things, but Jesse and Joey didn't; thoughts that they might were gone, as her growing mind learned to exploit things. My focus on Vicki made it worse.

We gave Michelle D.J.'s chores if she wouldn't listen this summer, but D.J.'s absence still made things tough. Michelle learned to be trickier, though she listened to Steph on the plane and when rehearsing for "Yankee Doodle."

In retrospect, the stress we put D.J. through ignoring Michelle's misbehavior so much was why D.J. got overheated. D.J. felt I should cut her slack, because of how much she had to help reacting to Michelle. I had a hunch about that, and about what the stress

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[305] "Come Fly With Me" is an embellishment by your "pen pal." Even back then a plane would turn back with small children involved. They were just offered refreshments, so they were only a half hour or so out with 11 to go. The joke was based on a man who mistakenly flew from Los Angeles to Auckland, but he'd slept for hours before realizing he was on the wrong plane. Your "pen pal" took advantage of that having happened recently to tell that joke.

[306] One was the first kiss she mentions in "Back To School Blues."

[307] A season 5 "Full House" ep. Has her saying they'd stopped having kids, so while Jimmy being a cousin in the "Fuller House" series is possible, it's more likely he's born just after that.

had done, so I waited till she calmed down, unless it was about a boy. Then, I was often the emotional one, knowing what Jesse was like as a youth.

It was odd D.J. hadn't written more than one short card for six weeks in a foreign land; most call! She loved all of us, but she felt a little stress here. She hadn't wanted to spoil her trip by thinking about the problems caused by how lax I'd been.

Joey – Michelle's Jokes:

Since Michelle loved jokes and memorized very well, I'd helped distract her some by teaching her more jokes and ways to tell jokes, like she'd asked. For instance, with a straight face, she asked Stephanie how many toes a mile had once. Sometimes, she'd pause a moment to see if she could think of a joke.[308]

6-1 Come Fly with Me Aug. 1, 1992

D.J. – Her busiest year yet, and the Steves:

You know how they say everyone had a twin? There was another Steve in our school; he was a distant cousin of my boyfriend Steve. [309] I'd met my Steve in Spain. Why not, Steph's class had three Jennifers. It'd be fitting if in their twenties, the other Steve dated one of the Jennifers.

I knew, as I came back, this year would be really tough. I'd be on Student Council and the paper. Kimmy even hoped to run for class president. Such confusion would leave me much more hassled - if the school survived.

I was glad Michelle was so wild about sweets that revoking dessert worked so well. I wished she listened well enough I could quietly correct, like that time with Steph. t least Michelle listened to her stomach, and she accepted that Dad was the boss and that he just didn't act tough enough at times. She knew I would, though, and eventually behaved; she had to have her beloved dessert back.

I even quietly corrected Steph later this month. She made a comment I feared might reveal that Dad wanted to break up with Vicki, and which sounded a bit harsh or rude. Steph apologized right away later, as she always did.[310]

6-2 The Long Goodbye Aug. 25-6, 1992

Jesse – Not Renting, Teddy's House Not for Sale:

We'd saved over $1000 a month on rent by living in the attic. Housing costs are really high in the entire Bay Area, but we still started to save money for a good down

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[308] "Come Fly With Me," a five-year-old could ask for real, but she counted to 100 at 4. So, it was a joke, as were other things that sound young, with her trying to think of one a few times.

[309] Kimmy's birthday ("Birthday Blues") is their 6-month anniversary. They'd known each other only 3 months in "Radio Days." Also, perhaps "Prom Night," Steve seems to have gone with his other girlfriend the previous year. So, it's a different Steve in season 5. Again, the story, not the actor, is canon. Steve seems uneasy at Joey's Godfather impression – but if he'd known them he'd know how silly Joey can be. More episodes point toward a recent meeting, so D.J.'s comment about them knowing Steve (at least as a boyfriend) is cancelled out by these, and by the general rule of later episode facts ruling. Besides, writers use the name Steve for D.J.'s cousin, when usually they pick all different names to avoid confusion.

The series "Fuller House" does seem to imply it's this Steve in Season 5, but they could easily have just been friends, or gone to a movie later that spring.

[310] One can see D.J. correcting her in unedited DVDs, another sign she was involved in correcting; even this is clearly quiet, in private, which is how they'd be, so as not to embarrass the person too much..

payment. Next year, we had the Smash Club, which was a drain on finances even with the loan I got, but this year, a house in the neighborhood, where we wanted to be, might have gone up for sale. It was just rented out – for even more – since the cost of buying one is even worse, while the family was away for a while.

See, Teddy's dad's job needed him to go to Amarillo to set stuff up for about eighteen months. Well, that wouldn't be convenient to ask a guy to uproot his family, sell the house, and come back and look for another one. So, what some companies do is, they arrange for temporary housing so the family can rent, and the home the family had is rented out to someone coming to the San Francisco office. That's what happened here. After a few years, Teddy's dad had more seniority and job security, so he stayed from then on. The kids didn't understand this at their age; Michele just let Teddy keep her pig.

Stephanie – Sat., Sept. 5 – Michelle's Testing:

Michelle was starting to test more. She didn't even go to Uncle Jesse - who was like a mom - when Teddy was moving. She thought she'd always get her way if she tried hard enough. Aunt Becky said she got it from Uncle Jesse - he had a similar streak that was slowly improving. She finally let Teddy go, but other problems existed.

Michelle knew just how far she could push Dad. She wouldn't come for breakfast, saying she was busy, despite Uncle Jesse and Joey ordering her to come down for school. Yet, she came right away when Teddy arrived. Joey thought perhaps he should have walked upstairs and taken her hand to lead her down, but even Uncle Jesse hadn't done that. I don't know if they were waiting on Dad or what. Days later, she ran and laughed with the phone instead of giving it to Uncle Jesse.

Dad ignored little things like that, but D.J. had a long talk with her about listening and explaining why she was busy. She reprimanded Michelle sharply, and corrected her lightly after the phone thing. She corrected her several times for disobedience over the first weeks she was home, as Michelle had learned to be sneakier. Eventually, D.J. took dessert away for each act of defiance, which helped a lot.

Becky – Sept. 12 – D.J. corrected with noone around; End of testing for now:

D.J. did well. As I'd advised early, she tried to always correct in private, so it was less embarrassing. It helped; the problem was always Danny ignoring so much and D.J. not being proactive, not actively talking and working with Michelle more.

Thankfully, Michelle knew she couldn't get away with anything with D.J., though she only reacted when necessary, with Danny punishing. She knew he'd ground her, and would have known even if he hadn't last month, though this round of testing would have come a few weeks earlier. Most kids test a barrier – which has to be tougher for some - but don't cross it much. With Danny not punishing consistently, it was murky, and kids push more at this age, anyway, so she did more.

Tonight, Michelle ran wild and wouldn't go to bed despite Danny's glare, the result of a big sugar rush.[311] Sweets almost never made her this unruly, but a few times they had. D.J. came home, and got behind her, prodding her upstairs, and scolding, sitting her in the corner for not going to bed and saying no dessert for a few days.

She hated being yelled at, but knew if she ignored Danny, D.J. would get tougher.

[311] She'd test it quickly, yet in "The Dating Game" when Joey says it's bedtime, she obeys. Plus, she goes right to bed when D.J. rises, like she knows to obey if D.J. starts toward her.

We watched, talked more about her behavior, and the problems ended. Danny let her dig a hole to Japan as a reward. He knew she'd put the dirt back. That helped a lot, too.

6- 3 Road to Tokyo Thurs., Sept. 3-Sat. Sept. 19, 1992

Kimmy – President Kimmy, the system, and some of her weirdness:

I was one of four class presidents - 9-12th - elected by the Party Hearty slate. We planned to party. D.J. told me I had to work "with the checks and balances" as president but it didn't make sense - I didn't have a checking account.

I felt I'd come a long way. After all, when I was in Kindergarten once, and the teacher asked us to identify what something was - it was a capital "A" - I said it was a funny looking hat. I was on top of the world - thankfully, D.J. helped keep me there.

D.J. – Kimmy's strange presidency – a few tidbits:

I worked hard to keep Kimmy from being impeached as president for throwing some huge party - which, luckily, I talked Kimmy and the other presidents out of - or just for general weirdness. For instance, we got her to drop the torn t-shirt contest pledge, only because nobody wanted to tear up their t-shirts.

I knew it would be a difficult year if Kimmy won. I was even more certain when her first proposal was to change the school's team name to the Yeast Infections, with our mascot being this huge foot that set off stink bombs if we scored. I warned Kimmy that that would inspire the other team to keep us from scoring.

I won't even mention the uniforms Kimmy designed. Let's just say the other team would have needed sunglasses, they were so wild. It had stripes, polka dots, and other stuff in weird combinations. Rollerblading in the halls didn't go over well, either.

This would be a long year on Student Council, but it wouldn't lack in humor. I did so much for her the teachers took to calling me Edith Wilson Tanner. Edith Wilson was the first lady who ran the country to some degree - accounts vary as to how much - while President Wilson recovered from a stroke.

I was glad for the laughs, because I had to unload quite a few chores and lectures and revoked privileges on Michelle. She settled after I got tough. Dad wasn't doing much - he was concentrating on Vicki and thinking of Mom.

I hoped he wasn't reverting to his old ways. At least Michelle had a birthday party with a horse theme in November. She shaped up for that really well. She had plenty more privileges and could do more chores at this age, too, so I wasn't too concerned.

6- 4 Radio Days Sept. 21-22, 1992

Jesse – Sept. 21 – How he got the radio job, and his conscience:

I had a wild streak, a selfish streak, and a few other streaks, but as long as they weren't white streaks in my hair I didn't mind. To God, getting me to mature must have been like riding a bike with the kickstand down. That just shows it's all grace with Him, I guess; He just keeps showing more love to us. We can't lose our place in His family. My worst problem was deception. I kept evading responsibility.

I did some soul searching after that code blue on the club owner, but I was too psyched up about our record deal. Life was cool, and I didn't think I had to worry.

Anyway, I had this interview I hoped would lead to a job as a deejay. I had no FCC license, and little clue of what one was. Thankfully, Joey told me. They test you on

stuff like those dials and buttons, the emergency broadcast system, and how to stay on frequency. Yeah, that last is for the engineer, too, but the guy spinning dials has to know how to watch. It's just not his job to fix it. Joey had applied for work at a few stations - both before he moved in and that time he wanted to quit comedy.

Joey said he'd likely need to renew his license by taking the test again after being hired. So, I didn't need it before being hired. Danny had kept his up to date.

People figured our boss wanted Joey and me together because he was funny. That was only part of it. She knew Joey had some education, and they liked me if I could be teamed with someone with good education. That's why I blew up more than normal at Joey. I couldn't tell anyone, though. I was afraid they'd find out I never graduated. I worried I'd be a total failure in their eyes.

It was starting to get to me, though. Part of me hoped I'd get forced into telling. I wanted that guilty feeling over with in the worst way.

Stephanie – Sept. 28 – Steph late, PA stuff, not helping in Middle School:

Today, I was helping tutor a couple kids, and resolved some disputes. That's why I could pick Michelle up from her Honeybee meeting on my way home from school, even though we went to the same one and got out at the same time.[312]

Bullying wasn't nearly the problem it could be. I was pretty good at stopping it and helping kids to be nice. However, one fifth grader was so shameless as I tried to correct him, last week I sadly gave him a smack on the rear. It's kids like that Michelle said to watch out for on the playground, though they had recess at different times.

I felt really badly if I gave a fwap. However, I told myself someone would have, and I gave it only as a reaction to extreme rebellion and/or meanness. I took everything into account, like size and nature of the child – I knew who was more timid even if they did something wrong, and if such a reaction – not on purpose – was considered, what could take just a light fwap, and what required more. I only gave a fwap maybe a dozen times or so as PA. I had firm limits, but also gave lots of praise to everyone.

Best of all, I took D.J.'s advice – I made sure kids knew I cared. It worked. I was respected, but nobody was afraid of me. Kids hugged me and stuff all the time. Aunt Becky's town was so small, kids were in one school from Kindergarten through eighth grade. I reminded her of a well-loved principal she'd known; the way I worked with kids was just like they expected the older ones to there.

I felt so proud! I felt on top of the world tutoring and helping kids. I stopped in Middle School with no little kids who needed help. Once Michelle, who I helped at home, started to apply herself more, I felt like my work was done, like D.J. always hoped would happen with Michelle, and I could just hang out, though I was a leader some, like with Gia. I got a lot better as I matured after Michelle recovered from her accident.

6- 5 Lovers and Other Tanners	Mon., Sept. 28, 1992
6- 6 Educating Jesse	Oct. 6-Oct. 12, 1992

Steve – Tues., Oct. 6 – Jesse reveals the truth:

We figured Jesse would be the perfect candidate for this stay in school drive. He always talked about how he struggled because he didn't like school. He didn't go to

[312] "Lovers and Other Tanners," most feel that was the main reason she was coming home from school and able to get Michelle at her Honeybee meeting that day.

college, but everyone figured he had to have graduated.

D.J. was shocked, and sensed he really felt badly about deceiving people, though. And, it felt good for her to learn her Mom had at least suspected it, and probably knew.

Jesse:

After the initial strangeness of Kimmy being president of anything, things seemed to be settling down a little. I had passed my FCC test, and with D.J.'s help, and Steve's a little, Kimmy was settling into a pretty good routine, with D.J. giving lots of guidance.

However, their stay in school campaign forced me to tell the truth. When everyone cornered me I figured, "This is it." I had to tell - God was forcing me. I was so glad I did. When I finally did, it was a huge load off my shoulders. The lie I'd lived was history, and I could go on with my life. That's when I really became free, when I told the truth. And, I couldn't stop thanking everyone later for standing by me - especially Joey, who had put up with my using him to get two jobs.

Still, there was something missing. So, I went back to get my GED.

Danny – Mon., Oct. 12:

Michelle was super at school, and even tried to help Steph a bit in getting others to be nice to each other. Michelle would never act rude there. And, after that Gumby incident and the other problems, she was improved here, too.

Still, she did little things lots of kids do, like jump on beds for our reaction, tickling her. She jumped on D.J.'s bed after Steph said "no" today.

"Michelle, go discover America in honor of Columbus," D.J. joked. When Michelle didn't stop, she opened her eyes. "Hey, that's my shirt," she blurted.

I poked my head into the room. "Sorry, Deej; I would have stopped her, but, well, you're awake anyway. Michelle wanted to be grown up and not wear pajamas, so Steph let her borrow a shirt." Michelle wasn't chilly, but of course, she was still jumping.

D.J. grabbed her so she wouldn't fall, and tickled her playfully, enough so she had to stop to catch her breath, and knew D.J. was annoyed. She didn't do that all the time with her, but did sometimes. If Michelle took something of D.J.'s without asking, she knew D.J. would get after her playfully like that.[313]

Once calm, Michelle explained. "Daddy said we'd have to leave if there's a fire, so I needed a shirt for back here, if I didn't wear pajamas. So I wore your shirt."[314] She looked at me. "It's not a tush! That's baby talk."[315]

I sighed. "Come on, Michelle," I said, repeating the discussion we'd had last night, "your sisters call it that. It's such a cute word."

"I know what this is, Dad," D.J. remarked. "It's you not wanting her to grow up, versus her not wanting to sound childish. Mind if I talk to her?"

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[313] Teaser, "Nice Guys Finish First," her eyes grow wide & she runs, but she's smiling playfully.

[314] In "The Dating Game," Michelle wears such a shirt, but pajamas otherwise; a common phase at this age. The shirt is like D.J.'s in "The Hole In the Wall Gang," longer and not to be tucked in, so it would reach well below Michelle's knees, like in "The Dating Game."

[315] D.J. says the cute word "tush" like Danny ("Ol' Brown Eyes"), as does Jesse; they like a less harsh term unless it helps a joke (like Joey in "My Left and Right Foot".) Michelle says "kick some Tanner behind" ("The King and I,") so they can use a compromise term. She doesn't like really cute stuff. In "The Long Goodbye" she says she's too old to play with dolls, yet is not quite six. A huge difference between TV and Book Michelle, clearly showing the Jesse influence on TV Michelle.

"By all means, go ahead. I have to go." I hugged and kissed Michelle, and left.

D.J. – Helping Her Not Copy Denise Too Much:

"Michelle, I know how you feel. I've just learned to accept that's our term."

"I'd never use the bad word." I agreed, and praised her for never using curse words; she never used bad language. "Denise says 'butt.'"

"Well, you don't need to use her language, Michelle. Or are you Denise?" She gave me a look. "Michelle, give me a break; I'm correcting you nicely, and I expect you to accept it so I don't have to get loud. Understand?" She nodded. "So it's Michelle?" She agreed, and I was satisfied. "Good. Kimmy uses that word, and I never use it."

"Why don't you correct Kimmy?" Michelle asked.

"I tried once," I noted. "She thought gluteus maximus was the guy who killed Caesar, so I figured it wasn't worth trying again. Look, don't copy Denise. I know you don't want to be a copycat. Unless you're copying me with my shirt," I added dryly.

We laughed, and tried to find a compromise. She didn't like "cheeks" – that's what older ladies like Aunt Becky's Aunt Ida or Grandma Irene pinched on her face. She insisted politely that her feet were on the bottom, not her bottom. She thought "buns" just sounded funny, but we agreed she'd use one of those last two; and, she could use "butt" around Kimmy occasionally, though she only did a couple times.

I added, "As long as you keep behaving, I won't complain if you wear one of my big shirts to bed. I'll give you some old ones. Just ask permission to borrow them."

"From you, or Stephanie?"

"It'll be my shirts. So, ask me." She did, but not often. I couldn't help but be proud of Dad. "If Daddy's letting you do that, maybe he's getting better about change."

6- 7 Trouble in Twin Town	Fri. Oct. 16-Sun. Oct. 18, 1992
6- 8 The Play's the Thing	Mon., Oct. 19-Wed., Nov. 4, 1992

Joey – The Play, Rehearsing, Hockey, etc.:

School plays take a couple weeks to put together; we took a day just to assign roles. Then, Michelle was upset for a few days. By that Friday, the 23rd, she was totally happy with being Miss Liberty. Michelle went through what quite a few her age do, wanting to star in everything. Jesse and I blew it too, though. We wanted her to be Yankee Doodle, and talked with our hearts, not waiting for rehearsals. We never should have done that, but we redid the play, and Derek sang the "Yankee Doodle Dandy" song, rather than the song Steph and D.J. sang in their plays.

You can't expect all first graders to memorize really well. They won't all be like Kimmy was, but remember Charlie Brown's sister, Sally? Getting lines mixed up would be part of it, but it took a while to keep the whole show from being misheard lines. We held it, as such little plays are sometimes, on a school night.

I was glad for the break in the middle to do the charity hockey game. Jesse did a lot with the play that week, we had Stephanie as choreographer, and Michelle was happy again. Any one of us couldn't do everything, but we each did a little. For example, Steph worked with some of the kids after school or when PA work was slower.

The important part is, Michelle had learned her lesson by the end, which is what we'd hoped; she was maturing. Michelle encouraging Derek to go on stage really helped.

6- 9 Nice Guys Finish First	Tues., Oct. 26-Sat., Oct. 31, 1992

6-10 I'm Not D.J. Nov. 5-9, 1992

Stephanie – Giving up tabloids, mad at self for doing wrong:

We loved to give away smiles, like Mom. I gave up tabloids real fast; I just lost interest on my own, not as much because of Dad's influence. They'd just been ways to make me laugh off the stress of being a PA. When I did something wrong, like getting my ears pierced against Dad's wishes, I'd think "Mom would find out" – mostly because of D.J.'s stories. She'd done a few bad things at this age that Mom knew about but Dad never did, and she quietly corrected her. Although, when she told Dad she had, after he found out what I'd done, that was mostly to make me feel good..

I was mad at myself as usual, but accepted myself more by now. After a few days, I was satisfied that the school still wanted me as a PA. In fact, in a way, it helped. Kids saw they could mess up and still be someone special. Times like one with Gia, with hormones going, show why girls don't discipline in Australian high schools, though more mature ones mentor others. Telling kids about my messing up – like with ear piercing - helped me later with Gia, too. I'd learned how to get through to someone who thought her life was going nowhere, once I forgot about the boy we fought over.

I was sadly like D.J. in other ways too. I wasn't as good at sharing my room, though I was close to Michelle in that I liked to help her with school. We didn't have Mom to encourage us. And, D.J.'s example wasn't very good. She's right - she'd made it seem like a forbidden fruit, and I had to find out what was so enticing.

This year, of course, Kimmy's strangest ideas ended up splattered all over the school newspaper after Council meetings. So, I didn't have to snoop for those.

Danny:

Another reason she didn't snoop as much was her position. D.J. confided things in Steph that she wouldn't before, because she appeared to be able to handle more. A few times she didn't act like one, but she was human, and we always forgave. Plus, they all loved talking about Vicki out in the open.

I wasn't ready to marry Vicki when the idea first came up, but we grew closer, and the more I thought about it, I decided to propose a few months later. I'd only take someone everyone was comfortable with; Vicki fit that profile perfectly. The girls all wanted her as a mom, and I knew she'd make a good one.

6-11 Designing Mothers Fri., Nov. 27-Sun., Nov. 29, 1992

Becky:

Vicki wasn't Pam, but she wasn't as abrupt as her mom, either. Her mom didn't have grandkids, so she doted on the girls like they were hers. She called a dozen people and worked quickly; she had a gift for knowing, right away, what was perfect in a room.

Vicki hadn't called 911, only a local fire department. [316] Vicki's call was like if your kitten's up a tree. They don't come for that a lot any more, but they did there. She accepted responsibility for calling the fire department and not thinking – she could have easily come herself. She only needed an ax.

[316] Quick response time could be another indication it's a suburb. However, even more importantly, Vicki did go overboard, and could have helped herself, though in a panic, her action is understandable, so can be canon. Still, she apparently asked no questions when Steph called.

Steph's idea came from recalling how Jesse came home when they said there was an emergency.[317] She just didn't remember what kind of emergency D.J. used to get him back. She thought only Vicki would come, just like Jesse came back alone when they said Michelle wouldn't take her cough medicine.

Danny gave the girls extra chores and lectured, since he hadn't discussed it when D.J. did it. Steph had most chores - Michelle didn't comprehend what was happening - and couldn't go out for the last few days she was grounded. The girls learned, and never tried anything like that again. D.J. also had a talk with them, saying how upset she'd be, for Michelle's sake. However, she also humbly admitted she hadn't set a good example when they got Jesse to come home. That part was for Steph's benefit.

Danny and Vicki got back together fast, and had their Christmas a couple weeks early, going to Napa Valley for the day. She managed to get here Christmas day, too.

D.J. – Dec. 17 - Michelle Obeying Very Well, Sleepovers:

We had a high-water mark, if you will, since I came back from Spain. Michelle was obeying very well. Still, she was a manipulator. She'd told Steph how to get more lollipops by screaming louder. Her ways could be ignored now, except for a talk about how it wasn't nice. Once she stopped being good to get toys, we'd have problems.

Amazingly, she and Denise had sleepovers; her birthday was about ten months earlier than Michelle's. Michelle called home once but made it through pretty well last month on hre first. That Uncle Jesse-like toughness really showed. She'd have started at eight or nine like us if I'd molded her. She'd want to be with Steph or me if it was longer, but we wondered if she might be ready for overnight camp with us.

6-12 A Very Tanner Christmas Dec. 19-25, 1992

Stephanie:

It was fun seeing a baby over at the Gibblers. I could only ever think of him as a little kid, so I didn't find him annoying like Kimmy; and even her, I'd never truly hat her. I felt kind of sorry for him, actually. But, the Gibblers seemed to pay more attention to him than they had to Kimmy. They had to have when she was younger, just like with Michelle, it's just they let her do a lot herself by the time they moved next door.

Jesse – D.J.'s Sweet Sixteen Ski Trip, Snow, Soup Kitchen:

With the radio show and some record money, Becky and I planned D.J.'s Sweet Sixteen ski trip with friends. My fake Christmas snow was from there. I joked to Becky about a snow cone maker so D.J. wouldn't overhear and guess the surprise.

The girls loved the soup kitchen, and we went next Christmas, too. I'd gone a few other times, taking them with me a couple of those. It wasn't always on Christmas, but we tried once a year around the holidays, then or the day after Thanksgiving.

I didn't want them to get like me – I didn't care for that in my teens. I only got back into it once I had kids. I realized I had to teach them not to be as selfish as I'd been. That, and hearing the girls so greedy for gifts, made me start going again.

I had, however, been giving money to charity. I fell in line with Danny, giving money to verifiable, worthy causes right when I moved in.

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[317] "The Seven Month Itch, Part 2"

Danny – Jan. 4, 1993 - Field Reporter, Early Potty Training No-Go:[318]

Becky did some broadcasting and reporting in college, and longed to try in a large market, like here. Jesse thought a talk show seemed like his radio show – the top of the line. However, he supported her, because he loved her. The chance to try out made a fun birthday gift, but she didn't take the position after the first day.

We had very interesting guests, like last week. Our guest described how in many places, kids potty train a lot earlier. Nicky and Alex were only fourteen months; normally Americans don't start till the kid is at least two. Well, Jesse can be a bit impatient, so they got our old potty chair out. He sat Nicky on it and made a swishing sound. He went after a few minutes. Becky was shocked. Still, it took months to train them. Training at that age requires the parent to read every little cue. That's hard when you're that busy. Still, Jesse and Becky did decide they could have another kid after this.

Jesse – On having more kids, and Becky's age:

Becky could see that it was possible for us to have another child. It just didn't happen too fast. It's not uncommon for a woman of 30 to have trouble having babies only a couple years apart. It happens, but there's no guarantee it will.

Becky – Tues., Jan. 12 - Michelle punished, phones, episode placement:[319]

Unbeknownst to us, Michelle was at it again. She called the "Funny Buddy" joke like for weeks without Danny's permission. He caught on today. Her punishment was early bedtime the rest of the week, meaning through Saturday, the 16th.

She went up to her room to think. He'd send them for a ten minute punishment, but also would sent them there to think, if they were grounded from some privilege. Anyway, she only listened because of his angry glare.[320]

She was quite upset with Danny. She knew he'd say "no" since it cost money each time, although she didn't recall the Tokyo calls from two years ago; just a timeout was given then. That's a long time for a child of six, and kids at her age don't think about phone bills and statements because they don't use them. Tokyo was also on D.J.'s phone line, so the bill came at a different time of the month.

What upset her most was that he gave the kind of punishment D.J. would. Danny was learning from her. She didn't like being punished, but she admitted that Danny was

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[318]. Successful potty training wouldn't happen when it aired (March), as the twins would be 16 months, or even in May (18 months), because in the U.S. almost no babies train even at 18 months. And, this episode must be before "The House Meets the Mouse," as Jesse and Becky were trying to have another kid then. They wouldn't decide to, and then have the whole conversation over.

The actors playing them were two and likely potty training during filming. They wanted it consistent, so all talk and potty training were tied to the actors' development. Some people then supported early training, though, so Jesse and Becky may have tried; Becky's shock matches what most feel about doing it that early. Your "pen pal" made baby talk easier to understand, too.

[319] With over a week from this till the end of "Silence is Not Golden," episodes can be plausibly imbedded, with the end of "Silence Is Not Golden" coming after them, easily placing them in order. The start of "Be True To Your Preschool" can even be before the end of this episode.

[320] She goes to her room to think about it – as is custom for them – only after he glares, and in other later episodes, the glare also works. Opinions vary on why when he was so inconsistent, but either not normally glaring, or D.J. enforcing when she didn't listen to him, work well. Plus, she was still obeying him pretty well at this point, before the dinosaur promise & Disneyworld.

boss, and was being fair, after a while.

As a result, she ate early and couldn't watch Joey on his date. He wouldn't have put her to bed normally. He'd have her put a video on in her room. However, with her bedtime an hour earlier still as punishment that night, even on a non-school night her bedtime was 7:30, instead of 8:30.[321]

It would take a bit longer to firmly cement the rule that she always had to obey Danny, but he had a fair chance if he tried really hard. She didn't like it, but that was normal limit testing. Tuesday, Denise was over, and she told Denise she didn't want to jump on the bed because Danny didn't like it. Okay, then she did it, but the point is, she was starting to go along with his rules.

Stephanie – Thu., Jan. 14 – Speech At the "Power Table":

The power table wasn't all it was cracked up to be; still, I was able to help.

It was all about popularity. I was PA and thus not necessarily the most popular. Still, as one of the three Jennifers put it, "We obey rules. Why should we have any problem with you; it's not like we'll get sent to you." That was true.

Much of their talk centered on future plans, getting in the best activities, being adept at picking what was "in" and "out' in fashion, and so on. Some was questionable, though, as they put others down, like Charles.

Today, I banged my tray, stood, and gave a speech. I explained how we need to be working to build others up instead of tearing them down. I said I'd learned that Charles suffered from a really bad home life – I didn't reveal any confidences, though – and insisted that people needed to think about helping others, and having sympathy, because one day, they would be in need of help themselves.

Some of the girls were like, "Well, you're supposed to say that." But, a few listened. I tried to steer them away from the meanest of stuff as best I could.

Ironically, the way the redistricting plan worked, the Jennifers were split up, and many "power brokers" faced the exact problem I outlined. I was never afraid to speak up, and as time went by, they were glad I did.

It turned out that my leadership also inspired the schools to consider having class presidents for lower grades next year.[322]

Wisely, they also felt separation of powers should be taught – the class president could not be the PA, as that could cause too much conflict. It would be for fifth grade next year and for others once they saw how well it worked.

6-13 The Dating Game	Fri., Jan. 15, 1993
6-14 Birthday Blues	Sat., Jan. 16, 1993

D.J. - Jan. 16, 1993 – Confusion over Kimmy's Birthday, Calendar weirdness:

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[321] "The Dating Game," he did stuff with older girls upstairs a few times earlier, when they were younger and stuff went on downstairs. One could argue for an earlier episode placement. However, if that's true, it means Vicki had to fly in from Chicago two straight weeks to see Danny. It being the same weekend makes more sense, though it would be nice closer to the airdate. Danny and Vicki's date is at 8 next night, but Michelle's bedtime is later, it not being a school night. A minority said Joey didn't make Michelle go to bed, but merely told his date it was her bedtime and then put a video on for her upstairs.

[322] Book, If I Were President," and subsequent books. Book Michelle is more capable, but they had to have them in the TV Universe, and there's no sign – unlike the little signs that there could be a PA – that there are class presidents when D.J. or Steph are in grade school.

We had a real party for Kimmy next Friday. I still can't believe I actually forgot her birthday; her parents were around more for a while with Jimmy born; they got her Wrestlemania tickets.[323] She wasn't just having birthdays whenever she felt like it like she normally did.[324] It's just when we got together, I was guiding her more, rather than just hanging out, with her as class president. I was getting annoyed with how much help I had to give her as President.[325] I tried not to blame Kimmy, but I could have; having them at all different times made it hard to recall to real one.

I wasn't even sure Kimmy would keep recognizing the calendar. In the last Council meeting of 1992, she proposed eliminating all months and dates from the calendar and instituting a very strange system. It would let us come to school only if it was raining or the temperature dipped below fifty degrees. As a very faint compromise, she suggested this could include summer days.

Still, I could understand why she wanted a party on her actual birthday. She was sixteen. I also could have planned something starting at 10 PM on Friday, so it would spill over into the early morning of her birthday. She'd have bought it.

6-15 Be True to Your Pre-School Mon., Jan. 18-Tue., Jan. 26, 1993

Jesse – Jan. 18 - Lying About Boy's Ages, Bassoon for Preschool; Playgroup:

It's hard to get out of the habit of lying.

Joey and I were off Monday – someone produced a special the station aired on Dr. King – and Cooper's dad talked about how he was starting preschool.

Cooper would turn three soon. His parents knew our boys were one, but there was a playgroup they could get into this fall. But, they had to be accepted into the preschool first. Eventually, after talking it over with Becky a few days, I brought an application on the 22nd, a Friday, the day Kimmy got her drivers' license.

I lied so much in applying. I said the twins were two. I just figured hey, get 'em bassoons, by two you never know, they might be proficient.

Saturday, the preschool wanted an interview. They got into that playgroup once we – okay, once I – told the truth about them being fourteen months. I don't know why I listened to Joey, with his jokes, like with the laundry. But, they were advanced for having been premature, though their verbal skills came more slowly for a couple years.

We decided even the playgroup felt way too structured for their ages. I'd just been frustrated because I wished I'd tried harder to begin with, so I didn't have to go to night school. We wound up with a different preschool than the one Michelle went to, partly because I'd met the person who ran it, and he was a big Elvis fan.

6-16 The Heartbreak Kid Tues., Jan. 19, 1993

Michelle – Jan. 19 – Why she acted like she thought she was marrying Steve:

I knew I wasn't really marryhing Steve, but wanted it to be real so I wouldn't have to listen to Dad's rules. I recalled when Dad wouldn't punish at all; he'd been so

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[323] There wasn't an event in Pittsburgh in our universe then, but this universe is merely very similar, like with the Honeybees, Danny's show, etc.; minor changes to facts and dates are normal.

[324] Becky's arrival ("Tanner vs. Gibbler") and D.J. saying November ("Shape Up") can't be January; she had to celebrate at odd times. This would help D.J. forget. It's just like Kimmy to have them at weird times, plus her parents' absence at times played a part, too.

[325] "Silence is Not Golden"

inconsistent lately, it helped me remember. I thought no punishment was fair after a while. After all, he'd ignored other things.

Becky - The good and bad of having one-year-olds:

Jesse didn't understand toddlers must be watched every minute at one.[326]

They egged each other on, and were more active than Michelle had been, so we were a little overwhelmed before the age when any discipline would have been effective.

Still, most of the time, they inspired loads of laughs and joy. Jesse blamed the crazier parts on Joey rubbing off on us- like when I'd sing in a mock horrible voice, and Jesse pretended to give me singing lessons once when my joke got out of hand.[327] Joey loved practical jokes. Deep down, Jesse enjoyed such jokes if they didn't go overboard. We loved watching them grow and their minds develop, and having fun,

6-17 Silence is Not Golden Jan. 11-20, 1993

Stephanie – Position Official, Permanent Starting Next Month:

The school board voted to make my position permanent at their first February meeting. The incident with Charles awakened them to the fact I'd only be there a bit longer, and they had to make a decision. I had to watch a video about helping kids from abusive or other situations, and stuff like that. Dad and Uncle Jesse and I talked about it, and Dad signed a paper saying we'd watched and discussed it.

Dad was really apprehensive about that part. It was only then we told him about Charles, and that Uncle Jesse had taken care of everything. He wished he could protect us forever from having to learn about such things. Hearing I'd handled one, with Uncle Jesse's help, made him feel better. And, we were all so thankful that our family held so much love and compassion. Even if someone had to get tough, like Mom with Uncle Jesse, or their parents with him…or D.J. with Michelle.

Kimmy – Fri., Jan. 22 – More Presidential Stuff:

We had my real party today, after I amazed D.J.'s dad with my driving. Then, I thought more about being president. I thought the calendar idea was logical. I figured anyone would come to school under those conditions. I figured it'd boost attendance, to see the staff have to scramble like that. Even D.J.'s uncle may have stayed to see teachers rush to get there before it stopped raining. Maybe Kathy Santoni would take her mind off guys, too. Kathy was a friend since first grade, and went way overboard, much further than D.J. or even I ever would. I talked a lot, but I was kind of shy.

D.J.:

Kimmy and I feared Kathy might end up pregnant. So, Kimmy proposed to end the break we had over Valentine's Day. Of course, as we discussed it, she suggested we have one week less of school and use the week to learn to interact the right way.

Kimmy had a good idea for once, as far as learning about relationships. I offered a resolution that she put forth for me in my absence. The school board approved it next

[326] His laptop in "Heartbreak Kid" is a perfect example – nobody ignores a fifteen-month-old near one, because they have no self control and discipline isn't effective yet. As noted elsewhere, they were one in the real Tanner world, and only "two" to appease the actors' family.

[327] "My Left and Right Foot," again your pen pal exaggerated a bit

month. After this school year, we did away with our February break.

We'd also find someone to teach the benefits of abstinence, helped by the forming of "True Love Waits" in our area in April. I loved it, and was anxious to get Stephanie and Michelle involved when they were ready.

6-18 Please Don't Touch the Dinosaur Jan. 30, 1993

Steve - Jan. 30 – Reactions to the dinosaur:

D.J. told me that her dad handled Michelle so well now, how he so completely blew it here was beyond her comprehension.

By the time I came from retrieving an expensive baseball card from my brother's friend, D.J. was about to lecture Michelle, who'd come in from riding her bike. Stephanie was scolding with a classic line, "You thought you were at recess in a museum, so you'll think you're in a museum during recess for a few days." Mr. Tanner and D.J.'s Uncle Jesse were discussing the destruction of a huge dinosaur skeleton.

Michelle knew she deserved to be punished. Instead, Mr. Tanner blamed Jesse and admitted he was too rigid. He promised fewer rules. I could see if he'd been so shocked that he let D.J. handle things; she'd told me how sad and uncertain he was back when Michelle was little. This was really odd, though. I just tried to be there for D.J..

Danny – D.J. and Stephanie punished Michelle for the dinosaur:

I tended to be too regimented when I was unsure about things like Vicki, so I could keep order in my life. I told Michelle I planned to be much more lenient with rules. I was afraid of going overboard like with cleaning, but I also wanted to play peacemaker; I didn't like how Jesse and I had fought in front of her.

D.J. punished with lots of chores to work off the damage, and no dessert for a week. After a lecture, Michelle went to her room as punishment to think for 10 minutes, like I'd send her. D.J. worried my pledge could play into Michelle's hands. Michelle had known it was wrong to run wild in that museum, and she deserved to be punished.

D.J. was involved in a number of school projects. Plus, we planned her Sweet Sixteen party by the 6th, so I had a few days to think about the Disneyworld trip.

Michelle behaved well at first. She knew Jesse's comment about rules was wrong. We'd worked a lot with her on knowing rules were to be followed, and how Jesse had the wrong attitude at times. Another thing that helped was D.J. and Jesse's talk. Jesse got a bit teary, as D.J.'s talk reminded him of how Pam used to talk to him.

My pledge, especially with D.J. gone, caused problems with Michelle that wouldn't have been there otherwise. Jesse deep down realized, when not arguing with me, that rules were meant to be followed.

Stephanie - Mon., Feb. 1:

It hadn't been an official school function. No teachers were chaperones, and it wasn't on school time. I exerted some effort to do anything about it. I understood why some said she didn't do much wrong, just playing tag when she shouldn't have, but I did do something about that.

I had Michelle write an apology to the museum, and Denise did the same. Both were remorseful. I said before, and emphasized after, that Denise had to help Michelle be good and vice versa, encouraging her as I'd learned. She could tell I cared, that was the

important part. It's what everyone always said would make me effective.

I'd had difficult cases like hers, but nothing really rough, other than the one with Charles. Some kept me after school talking to kids, trying to mediate stuff. Combined with my last year of Honeybees, I was busy.[328]

Michelle – Feb. 2 - Trying to settle, but failing:

I accepted D.J.'s rules best; she was consistent. I was lucky D.J. was so nice.

After the dinosaur, it was so easy to play Dad and Uncle Jesse off each other; Dad promised I could tell him if he was making too many rules, after all. That led to them just agreeing to almost anything by the time D.J. got back. That was the biggest problem after what happened at the museum.

Today, I asked to choose clothes to try on. Dad eventually let me. I chose well at first, but sadly, I did something dumb later and lost the privilege.

Danny – Why Jesse's Graduation, D.J.'s Trip When They Were:

D.J. was on a ski trip her friend Hannah and others planned. Jesse bought her tickets, as a gift. He figured she'd make up the work. I consented, if she took some to do ahead. She did; she didn't have Steve to distract her, so that helped.

Kimmy treated her office of President with respect for once by missing this week's meeting. She came back a day early to baby-sit; she could use the cash. The twins finger-painted all over Kimmy, after covering lots of other stuff. It was still a mess when we got back home. Kimmy did lots of cleaning then.

Jesse – Nervous for Graduation:

I couldn't believe we'd bought the tickets for that trip without thinking about the date of my graduation. Danny even had to back out as one of the chaperones.

I was very anxious, though I didn't show it. I didn't want to hear things like the theme from "Bonanza," which I didn't mind otherwise, as I was over fears of the dentist. I wasn't meant to go, I guess. Steve went by car and said how we were coming, though I didn't think about that. Danny called once we were unstuck. I was excited about the subway, after Michelle repeated stuff she heard listening to politicians about saving the planet – and some of Danny and Becky's guests. The environment is huge in California. She was surprised we chose it, though.

But, you know, Becky's car broke down when she tried to take Steph to that slumber party, so I figured if we'd gone by car, it would have just broken down, too.

Becky – Car Wouldn't Have Worked:

Jesse was right about my car - the fuel gauge was broken, and we ran out of gas on the way to pick up his diploma at the school. I hadn't used it after Saturday. So, taking the subway didn't hurt us. We would have just been stranded somewhere else.

When we finally got to the school Monday, we didn't run into any teachers, though Jesse still feared he was a failure in their eyes. However, we got to talk to plenty when Steve graduated in June, and they were all proud of Jesse.

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[328] "Silence Is Not Golden," she and Charles don't get there and start a project till after 5:00; sometimes she's at a friend's, too, but each is a logical explanation for getting home that late.

Danny –Wed., Feb. 10 – Michelle, nuts bothering her, sneakiness:

Michelle's digestive system couldn't handle nuts well. She could eat peanuts, but those are legumes, and very different. Normally, Steph would have compassion and not expect her to eat them. But, she saw Michelle get her way a lot, because of my promise.

Michelle tricked Jesse into buying something and me into saying "yes," and Steph knew about it. However, Steph thought like Jesse did, that I'd said "yes" and meant it.

D.J. – Rules about clothes, and tests: [329]

We were told what to try on, but we could choose which to buy. That's why Dad let her pick preschool outfits. She didn't like only choosing between two things, though. Her mind had grown. At three, being told which of two to pick was choosing. As one gets older, choosing is more complex. After some urging, he let her.

Michelle wasn't good at coordinating, but Steph and I helped. So, Dad kept his promise. I thought with our guidance, choosing could really encourage good behavior. Instead, she got a leather outfit and stick-on tattoos, which Dad forbade. She was too wild last summer, and outgrew her old one. Even if Dad didn't refuse to get a new one, she'd never have been allowed to wear them to school like she did.

She conned Uncle Jesse into getting them Sunday, before I got home from skiing. She made him think Dad let her have them. Dad was too busy planning our "personalized itineraries," and she asked in a way that made Dad think they were going for normal stuff. Uncle Jesse was too busy concentrating on work to ask if he'd let her.

She forgot about it with my birthday and all, but today, she wore leather and tattoos to school. She went upstairs to get something, ran down the opposite staircase, and made it to the bus too late for Steph to make her change.

Dad was mad when she got home, and told Michelle no dessert till we left for Disneyworld. He started to lecture, but she played them off each other and escaped a stern talk and timeout. Again, he tried to learn from me, that's why the glare worked when he'd do it. If need be, I'd back him up in a louder, stricter way.

When I got home, I did. I read her the riot act, and turned it into a mini-series. I said no dessert for two weeks for tricking her way out of a lecture, and tricking Uncle Jesse into buying them earlier.

I gave more chores for after Disneyworld for that and her manipulating so much lately. It was also for her attitude of mostly being sorry she got caught. I lectured harshly on how she was to accept that there was a right and wrong and be sorry for what she did, not just for getting caught. Because only being sorry for getting caught, I told her, would have "much more serious consequences" when I dealt with it.

I would not have her become a manipulator. Sadly, her limit testing continued. Thankfully, she listened here. From there on, while she tried to get out of things, she was always sorry for misdeeds. However, her bossiness increased.

Becky – Feb. 11 - Promise of Fewer Rules Biggest Problem, One Funny Test:

This was normal limit testing. Honestly, if Danny had only ignored the dinosaur,

[329] "High Anxiety." She "picked" her outfit in "Slumber Party." Choosing her clothes was a concern only months later, so Michelle would push for it when Danny pledged to not have as many rules. He'd let her as he always tried to keep promises, and she went too far. The privilege had to be taken away somehow.

Michelle would have stopped here. It was her normal limit. She was used to the routine. She'd have obeyed us better, and Disneyworld wouldn't have been a big problem.

There would have been little stuff, like here. I couldn't help but laugh. Jesse and Joey had left to do their show. Michelle came down after school in a bathing suit. She balked at us telling her to get dressed by arguing what she had on was clothing. I warned her to change before D.J. got home. She did. Danny and I had a long talk with her about proper attire. D.J. didn't say much, though she gave chores.

This was just innocent and funny. The summer when she was nine, Steph came down in one of D.J.'s suits, with tissue sticking out. She was modest, but comical.[330] Michelle did the same with one of Steph's suits, since she couldn't fit enough tissue in for D.J.'s, but the girls were good about being modest.

However, because of Danny's promise, and how she was able to manipulate, she got sneakier, and bolder. Danny had begun to pay attention when she didn't listen. But, she'd known she deserved to be yelled at, so when he didn't, she thought she shouldn't have to listen at all. What would have been small problems became big ones because of Danny's promise of fewer rules. With that Jesse-type wildness, we saw D.J. would have to start reacting again fast.

6-23 The House Meets the Mouse (1) and
6-24 The House Meets the Mouse (2) Feb. 13-4, 1993

Jesse - Feb. 14 – Steph Got More Time As Princess, and Other Stuff:

They let Steph have a couple wishes the next day. They did this as a promotion for one day here, and at Disneyland a few times. There, if there were siblings, they got a family honor. They'd learned their lesson about how rough things could get. Steph didn't wish for much different, but she did a much better job.

We had a whole week for rides and things, but the first day is always the most fun; we planned to go to the beach a bit, too, later in the week.

Joey and I had a promotional radio show Sunday morning. It helped with ratings, as people who later listened to church discovered we had a nice sound without being too heavy; after that, of course, I was delayed a bit before Becky's lunch.[331]

Michelle – Knowing She's Not the Boss, Punishment for Wandering:

D.J.'s harsh lecture about bossiness helped. Her talk about wandering was louder than Dad's. But, I apologized right away. Steph had been bothered a lot by my rebellion; D.J. wanted to emphasize that she should cut a younger kid slack, and wished to show she trusted me when she let me go first. I felt bad when Steph left to go back to the hotel. D.J. says my apology saved me from the talk about the princesses, though she wouldn't have threatened quite yet. I knew bosses had rules, to. I thought of her story, anyway; someone said what the good princess is supposed to be like.

I was grounded after vacation for three weeks; no TV, videos, etc., and no phone, either. D.J. reminded me I'd lost dessert for a week, too, and had chores when I got back because of my earlier misbehavior and disobeying Dad.

I knew wandering was very dangerous, especially going to another part of the

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[330] Book, "Two For One Christmas Fun"

[331] Part one says it's a weekend, and as shown that would be a Sunday, but California is 3 hours behind Florida, so if they were to have lunch right after the show, it had to be 8 or 9 AM California time.

place. and everyone was upset. Dad wanted to protect us from hearing about hazards, but this time, we did. They had security talk with me about dangers the next day. That scared me; I never wandered off alone again.

By the end of vacation, I was bolder. The lesson about wandering, which was most important, overshadowed talk about bossiness. Rules can be looser on vacation, too, though, so that wasn't a problem till we got home.

I was rebelling against D.J., too. I knew, in the back of my mind, to obey Dad because D.J. said, if for no other reason. She just wasn't watching as closely. Maybe I wanted her consistency, in a way. Soon, I'd realize D.J. was right. Everyone had rules.

Becky – Mon., Feb. 22 – Major Testing, Engagement a Distraction for Danny:

Michelle tested on a lot once we got home. She tried to push her bedtime later and later and wouldn't go. She test on bathing, too - Steph caught her before and after our trip standing in the shower so the water wouldn't touch her, and trying to get by without soap. Plus, Michelle pushed on other things, like Jesse had; she'd say she watned dessert for supper, for instance, even though she wasn't allowed sweets as punishment.

Michelle defied so many limits and ignored so many commands, Danny ran out of ideas, and D.J. was running out of chores. She used the promise to play Danny and Jesse off each other quite a bit. She manipulated them enough it frustrated her when it didn't work. And, here it did, because like when he ignored stuff with the possible breakup, now his proposal was distracting Danny a lot, and Michelle took advantage.

By the end of this week, D.J. had mostly emptied her chore chart, and Michelle had lost most privileges till March 13th, with all punishments combined. D.J. was very worried. I'd give advice, but never interfered. However, after another week, I'd have told Danny to turn things over to D.J. for a bit, so it didn't become routine.

Dr. Landress – Tues., Feb. 23 – Doctor's Orders – Take Charge:

I nearly dropped the light I was shining in D.J.'s eye when I heard.

By Michelle's checkup, normal testing had been solved. A team effort was fine. His ignoring things worried me a bit. Still, he'd been consistent before, and they were small things, so it was normal. At Stephanie's, I learned about "Funny Buddy," and that Mr. Tanner disciplined effectively. He was progressing well.

By the time I saw D.J. – a bit later with the ski trip, Disneyworld, and her school work - things had unraveled so much I couldn't believe it.

"Mr. Tanner…allow me to be frank," I finally said.

He was a bit nervous. He chuckled and said with a corny grin, "Remember what Michelle said when you said that at her four-year-old checkup?" He turned to D.J. and added, "She asked if he wanted to be a hot dog. They are so literal at that age."

I don't like to roll my eyes at patients, but I was tempted. "Mr. Tanner, I said you had to be consistent. You have a monumental task ahead of you now."

"I know. Doc…I'm trying. I just…do you think she can handle overnight camp? If D.J. is her boss at Camp Lakota, that might help. Right? I think she can."

"Mr. Tanner, we're talking about solutions now. She could; you say she's okay on sleepovers. But, the way D.J. describes things, don't wait months; or even days." I recommended a family meeting where they discussed how to insist that Michelle follow the rules. "You must tell her you made a mistake in what you promised."

"But it wasn't. Though…maybe I did want to gain her favor a little."

"Mr. Tanner, letting the others say if you were making too many rules at that age may have been okay, in moderation. But, to a girl who remembers you never punished, and ignored misbehavior later?" I sighed. "I said you needed to be consistent for that role as a parent to be firm in her mind. You did. Now? To her, it's like you said she could take it back to the time you let her get away with everything, even like 'Funny Buddy.' She's insisting on that. If you'd let D.J. handle the dinosaur, with no promise, it would have worked after a while. Get together, make a plan…and hope for the best."

I didn't want to sound any tougher. He looked lost, as if he was thinking of Pam. I had my doubts whether he could do enough. But, I knew D.J. would help.

Danny – Fri., Feb. 26 – Camp Lakota, Working Out a Plan, and D.J.'s bond:

Camp Lakota ran for three weeks in July. I'd held back too much last year, and knew D.J. wanted to work there this year. I'd decided Stephanie could go for three weeks. Today, I decided Michelle could, too. She was super-excited, even as I explained D.J. would be her boss so she could learn to listen.

As for other things, I was at a loss. Jesse said "lay down the law" but didn't have any ideas if Michelle kept disobeying. I needed Pam. D.J. was the closest thing.

D.J. had a real bond with Michelle, though nothing like Jesse's. She obeyed D.J. well. She knew D.J. really loved her and deep down realized D.J. knew best. She wasn't the consistent mother figure who molded her from the start like she could have been. But, D.J. was the consistent, loving enforcer of rules that caused Michelle to know when D.J. said something, she meant it in love. So, I acted, though with so few privileges, I feared my action might lead D.J. to act like Pam would in a way I dreaded.

Still, it helped. Soon after she obeyed right away, and did chores nicely.

D.J. – Thu., Feb. 27 - D.J. plays detective:

Michelle's look told me she was being sneaky about something. Last night, Steph was on a sleepover. Without Michelle knowing, I changed the channel on Steph's TV to one I knew Michelle wouldn't watch, and then turned it off. She knew she wasn't allowed to watch it in timeout or with TV taken away as punishment like now. However, if she did watch, she'd change the channel.

For the first time in a long while, I prayed, dreading the confrontation I might have to have with Michelle. We didn't pray nearly enough by now, only in emergencies. This qualified. I asked that she please be contrite. I prayed for strength and success in preventing her from turning into our Uncle Jesse.

Dad had started by not disciplining, just going into his room and missing Mom terribly. I understood his feelings, but I'd pushed that aside and reacted to misbehavior for a long time. I fretted, determined to keep her from being like Uncle Jesse. I was convinced that this was where it started, and I was unwavering in my push to stop it.

Becky – Danny hands things over to D.J.:

D.J. told Danny about the channel being changed this morning, but said to wait; a bag of cookies was missing from the cupboard, before its contents were to go into the cookie jar. D.J. said she craved them, and they caught Michelle putting it back.

"I just wanted to see if you'd catch me getting these out," she said impishly.

"I know you were watching TV when you could not as punishment, young lady, and that that bag was in your room!" D.J. scolded. The TV part had gone on a few days; her ornery look was about getting the cookies.

Michelle hung her head in shame. "I'm sorry." She turned to Danny. "I know I shouldn't have. But, you promised fewer rules," she protested with a puppy dog look.

"Michelle, you know to obey our punishments!" Danny declared.

"I have to work twice as hard on that look," she muttered. Danny tried to correct her, but she was steadfast. She gave an insolent look and said, "I don't like your rules. I want it to be like when you didn't punish me!"

"You're right. If you don't want to accept my punishments, I have to accept it." Michelle brightened, till Danny said, "She's all yours, Deej. Michelle, I'm giving D.J. full authority over your behavior and punishments until you're ready to listen and obey my rules. I'm sorry I let things go. I always have trouble seeing you sad, or grow up."

I could tell he disliked this. "We all love you, Michelle, especially D.J.," I said.

"Aunt Becky's right. And, I know you obey D.J.." Michelle gulped as she looked at D.J.'s angry face. "I love you." They hugged, and D.J. took her upstairs.

He sighed, turning to me and Jesse, who had come from the attic. "Dr. Landress was right. I had to be totally consistent. It could have worked. Things went well till I got lazy, then…Well, she's always known D.J. loves her. She'll listen." We agreed.

D.J. – Her Toughest Lecture:

I made Michelle sit on her bed. I felt bad for her, knowing the lecture she likely needed. I couldn't help but recall how different Steph looked and acted after wrecking Joey's car, but I wouldn't compare siblings. I knew Steph disliked it when Dad thought she had to be like me. I simply considered that Michelle clearly knew better.

"But, I obey your rules," Michelle tried to argue.

"And what's my number one rule – obey Daddy!" I declared. "I told Daddy, and tried to let him handle you," I scolded, shaking my finger so hard you'd think I was trying to shake it of. "You need dealt with much more firmly!" She was totally deflated, getting very quiet. She knew she was in for something very stern.

That was just the start. I reprimanded sharply, saying she'd do spring cleaning with Dad for disobeying punishments. I scolded about that, "Funny Buddy," misbehavior before and after Disneyworld, and her manipulating Dad; things she knew were wrong, but kept doing, since Dad ignored so much. The others ignored, too, but he was the dad.

Fortunately, her heart was touched. She was very contrite. She was just too used to getting away with things. I promised to stop her.

After my lecture, I picked her up. Her eyes widened, as if sensing my thought; she was bigger, so if I spanked her, I might give a couple more light fwaps than I would have before, though I'd still try to hurt only her feelings. The lecture helped avoid that, now I'd try to make sure. I smiled and hugged her, then got quieter, with her facing me. I held her head up, making her see my angry face.

"Before you sit in the corner, we are going over the consequences if you continue to disobey, especially if you are only sorry about getting caught!" I wanted to ensure that attitude didn't return. It didn't.

"Yes, D.J.," she said very humbly. She wouldn't dare get sassy, but she was thankful I'd shown some warmth, too. I had been upset.

"First, there are very serious long-term ones if you keep this bad attitude."

We talked candidly about how everyone has rules, even adults. We discussed how not obeying them can lead to really bad things, like prison or death. It was on her level, but very serious things could have happened to Uncle Jesse. They didn't because Mom had kept him from going way overboard. Even that didn't prevent his Dr. Dare stuff, which could have really hurt him. I wanted Michelle to avoid that.

At the end, I pledged firmly, "I will never let you become such a rebel, young lady! You will start obeying rules and change that bad attitude right now!" Though I'd only hurt her feelings, I got choked up, making it sound worse. "If you don't start to listen," I admonished, "I will stop your disobedience by going through your bottom with a spanking to get through to your heart." I rubbed her bottom as a warning, while thinking about how I'd still have to be rather light yet.

She hugged me tight, her natural reaction to the threat. "I'll be good, D.J.," she assured me quickly, pledging I'd "never, ever, ever" have to do it.

I didn't. I was so thankful she was sensitive. I told her precisely what would lead me to do it. We discussed what I'd do, and how sad we'd be. I was tough, but I wanted to ensure I didn't even have to hurt her feelings. The minute I said "spanking," though, she knew her days of getting away with everything were over; I could tell she was going to be good. She always tried to avoid the possibility of getting hurt.

Just thinking about it bothered me. I knew she might think I'd do more than I would. It was my turn to miss Mom terribly in my room, as Michelle wept in the corner. I really could have used Mom's advice, but I thought I'd done well.

Dad joined me, and I fussed at him for a moment, relieving pent up frustration.

Dad hugged me and let me cry in his arms. "I know; I feel so lost without your Mom at times. It may not always seem like it, but I know what Dr. Landress says is right. She needs someone who can be consistent to enforce limits. Thanks, Deej."

I checked to see that she was in the corner. She was. Joey entered Danny's room, and we filled him in. He reminded me Dennis the Menace was the same and that the few times I'd mentioned it were like the few times Dennis got fwaps, since he was wilder. And, even with Dennis it hadn't hurt. When Steph got home, she had the same reaction, she had faith by now to know I could hurt only Michelle's feelings without Steph having to signal me I was doing it okay. I always wanted to be the best, after all.

I just wanted this to be the end of it; and, it would be. By summer, she was dong chores and obeying rules perfectly.[332]

Michelle:

As much fun as it was to get away with things, I had to be good. I felt lucky D.J. hadn't spanked me. I thought she might threaten it right away if I'd gotten really brazen. I wouldn't have dared, though. Her tone said I was really naughty and better shape up. If I didn't listen when my heart told me to be good, she would break my heart.

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[332] "It Was A Dark and Stormy Night," she's willing to take the rabbit back without question, though he chewed through the box, and "Smash Club: The Next Generation," she calmly tells Nicky and Alex she can't play because she has to clean her room, with no bitterness over the rule. She still tests a little bit by letting them do all her work. The point is, her behavior is vastly improved in seasons 7 and 8, other than some attitude, and couldn't have been without D.J. getting tough, given Danny's laxness. Even at the bad times in those seasons, she'd only need D.J. to talk to her, as mentioned later. Fans generally felt something like what's here was needed sometime, most felt after Disneyworld was when.

D.J. turned my chair around, picked me up, and held me in her lap. She said, “I love you with all my heart, Michelle.” My teary look made her sad. “If I would ever spank you, it would only be because I love you, and I will do whatever I have to do to stop you from being such a rebel.”

“I know. You just want to make me be good,” I responded, wiping away a tear. We embraced for a while, as I thought about what she said. As hard as it was to hear D.J. say she’d spank me, I knew she loved me more than I could imagine. She just did what she thought best to make me behave. Her love made me shape up right away.

As we talked, she could tell I was ready to behave very well, and I did.

Years later, as I started to baby-sit, she said no matter what age, she’d have given light slaps, making it pinch a few seconds if that, and probably not at all.

I thought maybe she might be that gentle, but I was still amazed. She was right; I’d have known what it was. I wasn’t scared. But, I wouldn’t have even known how many she’d give, so I’d have been really unnerved. I’d likely have bawled “I’m a bad girl” by the end even with just a little pinch. It would have gotten to my heart fast without hurting my bottom. I was sensitive, but like Uncle Jesse I didn’t want to show it.

I didn’t always like to listen. My rebelling against Dad was testing D.J.’s rule that I had to obey Dad, too. But, I always knew when D.J. set a limit, I had to listen. She’d made sure following rules was positive and enjoyable. She showed so much love and mercy, it was staggering. I guess that’s what it’s like to be a mom.

Danny – Very improved behavior:

Michelle’s behavior would improve markedly. She had a bit of a bad attitude, but that was a remnant of Uncle Jesse’s influence. It got a lot better eventually, too. By the end of camp, Michelle was used to obeying me very well.

After the lecture, time in the corner, and some time talking with D.J. afterward, Michelle apologized to me in a very remorseful manner for “being such a bad girl” and disobeying so much. Her eyes barely left the floor.

“I’m sorry, too. I haven’t done a very good job at being consistent. I’m sorry D.J. had to put her foot down like that.”

“Her foot’s not the problem,” Michelle lamented. “It’s where her hand’s gonna be coming down if I don’t start to listen.” D.J. and I both hugged her.

I called a big family meeting that morning, to discuss how to help Michelle. If there was a hint of a problem this weekend, we reminded her she didn’t want D.J. to get involved. She hated to think of D.J.’s threat, and got embarrassed if we mentioned it.

D.J. never had to do it, and after this, never had to suggest it again.

After a week, I started taking back the reins, though D.J. still watched her closely through camp to make sure Michelle didn’t start rebelling again.

It was one of my saddest times, but I comforted myself with this; I’d let the one who was the “real boss” to Michelle have control. In a way, it was just like if Pam had been there. Thankfully it turned out well.

D.J. – Mon., Mar. 1 - Back to “normal” – just President Kimmy’s weirdness:

By Monday, she was behaving much better, meaning things were back to normal in our family. Of course, normal to me meant still having to help Kimmy with all manner of things as what amounted to “assistant class president.”

Today, in the Student Council meeting, we discussed our industrial shop teacher. He'd lost a finger last year, going from "three finger" to "two finger" McGee. Kimmy stood, suggesting we take a collection to have a finger replaced surgically.[333]

The way she phrased it, though, made more headlines for our school paper. "I move we take up a collection to give Mr. McGee the finger," Kimmy said.

I tried not to laugh at Kimmy, and usually succeeded, but after the stress of last weekend, I heartily joined others in the room as tears of glee rolled down my cheeks, the comment had been so crazy, so Kimmy.

"Somehow, that didn't sound right," she said, turning to me after a moment.

"No, Kimmy, it didn't." I said through my chuckling. "Thanks for helping relieve the stress from last weekend, though," I said earnestly.

Michelle – Grateful for D.J. being there, big improvement:

I'd learned how to get my way with Dad. Luckily, D.J. was the real boss. I would have been far worse, even at 7 and 8, if not for her. I didn't accept Dad's rules very well because of his inconsistency. I always accepted and learned from D.J.'s - especially when she was making me listen to Dad.

By summer, I obeyed Dad because his rules were more fun than D.J.'s tougher ones. Plus, I learned to recognize he had my best interests in mind. After a few years, I didn't need D.J. in the back of my mind telling me to listen to Dad. Even by the start of third grade I happily told Steph how great we had it and why she should listen.[334]

6-20 Grand Gift Auto Sat., March 13, 1993

Joey – Mar. 15 – Car Problems Solved – Seller Very Forgetful:

I got my money back today from the lady whose car was supposedly stolen. We could have kept the car, but that would have been taking advantage of her.

See, she was in the beginning stages of Alzheimer's Disease. She'd set out to sell a car she hadn't used in a long while. A few hours after walking home, she forgot she'd sold it. She'd managed to get it started and drove it to a parking lot where it died.

Anyway, my innocent nature made them question her more that evening. She'd forgotten she called the police, though she knew her car wasn't there, and figured she had. She insisted she hadn't sold it, but her relatives checked her bank account, and found a deposit that she couldn't explain. Nobody had seen her there, but everyone figured she'd been there. The daughter who served as power of attorney wrote me a check for the car and the money we spent fixing it up. They wound up getting guardianship over her a short time later; she was starting to make really poor judgments in other things, too.

Stephanie – Wed., Mar. 17 – Helping Michelle and Others:

Michelle no longer wanted to be "the boss." Today we threw what Dad called a "Good girl party." Everyone was so happy that Michelle was behaving well now.

I'd read to Michelle, and helped her with homework, quite a bit. She loved it; I was glad. While she was grounded, she played with Nicky and Alex a lot, in addition to

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[333] "Up On the Roof," the principal tells Jesse the man lost another finger.

[334] "Breaking Away" – Michelle's "don't rock the boat" comments show her behavior and attitude are way better than just 18 months earlier, as she knows they have it very good even with the rules, another major sign of big improvement thanks to D.J., as Danny hadn't enforced things consistently.

cleaning and reading with D.J. and I, and writing Teddy letters with help.

I tutored a few kids, but I loved doing it for her most. She played too much to be really interested in school, thanks to Uncle Jesse. She wouldn't have our desire to work hard for it till her old habits left. Still, she knew she could always turn to us. We'd make sure she did what she had to to succeed. I made her do the schoolwork, of course, but as we read and discussed the stories, I could see her starting to like learning.

"I'm glad you're getting into such good habits," I told her near her bedtime.

"Me, too," she said with a broad grin. "I'm glad I get dessert again."

"I'll bet! I'm glad even when you were grounded, you knew we all loved you."

We shared a big hug, as she agreed that had been special. She asked if D.J. could put her to bed, so they could talk alone. D.J. did.

Becky – Michelle Accepting Blame, Her Bond with D.J.:

D.J. sat down on the side of Michelle's bed, held her in her lap, and as they talked she said, "I'll be back to just being your sister someday. But, we'll still have fun."

"I know. You've gotta be like a Mommy when I'm naughty."

"Sometimes I wish I'd been like one from the start; that word 'proactive' we've talked about. It might have saved us all some trouble."

"It's not your fault, D.J.. I'm the one who was bad," Michelle consoled her.

D.J. felt sad and guilty, but as they hugged and shared "I love you"s, she was sure of one thing. Michelle's conscience worked. They sat and talked a bit more.

"I really like being good." Michelle blushed and leaned against D.J.. "I'm glad I didn't try to see what it'd feel like," she said with a nervous laugh. Wrapped in D.J.'s hug, she felt safe adding, "Don't tell anyone, but I'd have cried like a baby." D.J. said she knew what Michelle needed; Michelle agreed. It's likely emotional regardless of how much a family does it, but more so here, since it was so unusual. The idea was still a huge shock, so it made her listen. She realized while D.J. would try to hurt only her feelings, and Michelle figured that, she wasn't totally sure, since she was older and bigger. She knew she had been very disobedient – her conscience was at work.

Either way, Michelle knew for sure if she was totally defiant, D.J. would still always love her unconditionally. Just like I'd told Steph she would.

D.J. gave her a mothering peck on the cheek. "We've taught you well. There's a time for fun, sneakiness, and so on, but you know it's important to be good."

"I can't stand being a rebel," Michelle declared. They talked more; Michelle felt very grateful. "You're so good to me," Michelle said warmly at the end.

D.J. sensed what Dr. Landress would confirm. Her treatment meant Michelle was devoted to her. Michelle obeyed Danny, but sensed something was missing that caused him to need D.J. to teach her to obey. Thankfully, Michelle was bonding with him and learning to empathize, so she wouldn't take advantage or be bitter about it.

D.J. wouldn't be proactive like she had been for a while here. But, Michelle felt very secure with her when she was naughty. And yet, she knew she didn't want to go too far; and never wanted to get near that threat of D.J.'s again. She wouldn't.

Danny – Mar. 27 – Michelle Learned Her Lesson:

Michelle and I had long talks about a lot of things while she helped me.

"You know, the guys are right," I told Michelle as we finished scouring the last of

the bathroom tiles. “It’s more fun to do a little here, a little there, over a few weeks.”

“Yeah. We’ve had fun. Even though it was punishment,” she said regretfully as we collected the cleaning supplies.

“Well, we’re done. I’m sorry it took so long; I didn’t want to wear you out doing it all at once.” She looked down, and said it was a lot better than it could have been.

I sighed as I hugged my princess. I still felt badly that I’d let things go so long she turned from what I figured would have been a perfect kid like the others into a rebel.

I longed to tell her how gentle D.J. would be; that it would just hurt her feelings, but I didn’t want to think about it any more. “I really am proud of how much better your behavior has been, and how well you’ve listened the last few weeks.”

“Thanks, Daddy. At least I’m not the only bad kid in this house. Even if I am the baddest girl.” It was an honest statement, but it made me feel worse. “I’ll be a lot better now,” she said with confidence.

In a way, it might have been easier for D.J. to take dessert or TV away for a few more weeks. But, she’d known spring cleaning would help. Michelle was growing to understand why it was good to always do what was right, and how everyone felt when she didn’t. She was very grateful D.J. had used spring cleaning as punishment.

“Are you thinking about Mommy?” Michelle asked, noticing my sad face as we put stuff away. She’d come to recognize it a little when I did.

We went into the living room and sat. “Come here, sweetheart.” I cuddled her and said, “I am thinking about Mommy. About how much better things could have been. I know; I should be proud of how good you are not taking advantage of that.”

“Now I know why D.J.’s so mad when I do. We know she’s in Heaven. But, it still hurts that she’s not here. And, it hurts you most.”

“You know how to get to the heart of it. You’re right, Daddy hurts sometimes. We’ve had lots of talks about that while we cleaned, huh?”

“I’m never taking a drink at all.”

“That’s fine. We never have. But, more importantly, that driver hurt innocent people. That was really bad. That’s why we teach you girls to think about others, so if any of you would drink – and I understand why you would all refuse to – you would never get behind the wheel afterward, and wouldn’t let anyone else. It’s just common sense.” I chuckled. “Sorry, I’m rambling. Anyway, the point is that other people matter. I know D.J. focused more on how you could be hurt. And, she’s right. But, you’re always very kind and caring. We want to encourage that, so you always think about others; especially your family. We need to celebrate while we can.”

“You’re right.” She thought for a minute. “I never thought about that. I wanted my own way with everything before. I guess I’m growing up.”

I hugged and kissed her. “You’re going to grow into a wonderful young lady. The way you’ve been these last few weeks shows that.” She would have problems, certainly, all kids do. But, we needed to emphasize the positive.

D.J. – Summing Up the Worst Stage, and “her” prom:

I was a little wistful. All this time, I’d been so sad Mom wasn’t there, and got emotional, because I was afraid of being trapped “raising” Michelle my whole life. I longed for her guidance. In the end, Mom helped me anyway, through how she’d handled Uncle Jesse. By now, Michelle knew I’d always find out what she did, and I would

enforce rules. She knew to do what was right.

She was sensitive enough light slaps would have worked at any age. Even in the worst case, I'd only have had to hurt her feelings, though maybe several times if Dad never punished. Here, we might have succeeded without the mention. With it, everyone watched like a hawk. She knew to listen, as I always did what I said disciplining her. I was so glad I hadn't had to be any tougher. The Tanner hearts were very sensitive, and Dad couldn't see me ever having to go through the bottom to get to one. And, I didn't. Thankfully, this was the last of the worst stage.

Now, I could hang out with Steve, and dream of my prom. So, I was a sophomore. I had to cherish the moment - anything can happen in two years. I called it mine, though it wasn't the one that, as Dad said, "All seniors are promised as public school students." Teens don't always think about their past or future, so it was easy to get a bit proud.

I also kept Kimmy from getting too weird. She hadn't been impeached yet! Nor would she be.

Joey – Apr. 1 - Michelle's Fun April Fool's and Jokes:

With Michelle having her privileges back, we pulled a couple very mild April Fools jokes, with me supervising. She was anxious to let us; she wasn't about to go wild. I lifted her up to put our hand soap on top of the refrigerator, and gave her some rubber snakes to put in Stephanie's bookbag. Stephanie laughed, and Michelle had fun. It was those she always pulled, not the big kind. She mostly liked just telling jokes.

6-22 Prom Night Apr. 30-May 1, 1993

Stephanie - May 7 – Charles:

It had been several months since Charles was placed in a foster home. He called today to thank me for helping him. His dad still had troubles, but he was getting better. He'd eventually be one of the lucky ones who recovered and got his life and family back. So many lose their lives from such problems - both drinkers and innocents like Mom.

The important part was that Charles was starting to be more respectful, and have a better attitude toward many things.

I'd never considered how the way someone looked at life would affect things till I watched that video, and even then it was hard to understand. Almost all the kids I dealt with were from good homes, and the ones who weren't were caught early enough that with lots of help, they would turn out okay. They could understand that people cared about them, that they were being disciplined in love, and so on.

As Charles and I talked, I realized that Charles had lost that incredible hope that I always had and always would have, even when I was hardest on myself for things.

Now, he had begun to get some hope and faith back. We just didn't know how his dad would do. His mom had apparently had a drug problem and died herself years ago.

I gave everyone big hugs afterward. And, though I didn't know it, this prepared me for a more severe test in Gia. Charles was easier in that his could be reported. Gia could easily fall through the cracks without close friends to convince her to have hope.

Kimmy - June 5 – Steve's Graduation and Helping Jesse:

Before everyone went in to sit down for Steve's graduation, Mr. Pearson entered. I could tell Jesse was annoyed, so I drew the man's attention. "I hear you were Hairboy's

night school teacher. How many papers did he do on Elvis?"

"None, though I learned too much about Elvis in the classroom, Miss…"

"Kimmy Gibbler. I'm the one who suggested they put footlights in the hallways, and treat the school as a fashion show. And, of course, there was the last day in school when I had them douse me with Gatorade." I could tell he was getting a little annoyed. "I also suggested at Halloween you dress up as Willie Shakespeare."

Seeming to get an ulcer at that moment, he spouted, "Do not refer to the greatest English playwright of all time as 'Willie.'"

I couldn't stop, even as D.J. urged me to; I was having too much fun. "So, what will you do this summer? Probably read, I guess. I like fine literature, too, like the National Enquirer. And, then there's the stuff they write in bathroom stalls…"

At that moment, D.J. put her hand over my mouth. "Sorry, Sir. She doesn't grasp the nuances of truly fine literature."

"I should say not. I have heard many stories. I'm glad I am retiring next year." He turned to Jesse. "I wish to extend my congratulations, as I did at our last class. Also, thank you for this present reminder to avoid the cruel fate of having a student who would make your first foray into my course seem like that of a Rhodes Scholar."

"Why did he need to take it again if he had four A's?" I inquired. "And, why would he know all about roads?" Mr. Pearson groaned and turned away.

7- 1 It was a Dark and Stormy Night July 24, 1993

D.J. - July 5 – Steph's retirement as PA, Start of camp:

Kimmy demonstrated that she had basic skills. She just didn't like to use them.

This was one of those times. Steph said she hadn't wanted to look back. So, that last day as PA, like when she first helped Michelle, Steph turned to the principal and said, "My work here is done." She told Kimmy later, "I wanted to be like the Lone Ranger."

Kimmy looked oddly at her and replied, "But, you didn't leave on a horse or wear a mask. And, people know your identity."

I might have done too much for Dad early with Michelle, not pushing him to act, but I was in that habit doing so much for Kimmy. She needed it.

It's not like Kimmy was totally incompetent. She'd ignored Nicky and Alex and allowed them to finger paint all over the house and even her - yes, she had green legs when everyone got home. However, with older children, she could do well.

Okay, she still needed help. However, when I applied to be a counselor at Camp Lakota, Kimmy wanted to, too. I couldn't say "no," I knew she could do it with my help.

Stephanie - At Camp, D.J. and Veternary Work, Nervous About Redistricting:

We shared the camp with the Brownies, doing mostly the same stuff as they did. Kimmy needed lots of help at times - some of these girls were from the rough inner city Honeybee clubs. But, D.J. had two things going for her in helping Kimmy.

One was a much better Michelle. She wasn't perfect, but encouragement to be good, and a firm yet loving stance by D.J. lately, had trained Michelle to listen well. She knew now it was easier to obey Dad's much more lenient rules than D.J.'s.

The second was that, to my surprise, Kimmy knew how to do some things. She seemed out of her league when our cabin found a rabbit on a hike, which showed her interest in working with animals. D.J. suggested finding a brook to get it water, but

Kimmy thought she meant a girl named Brooke. Kimmy then suggested we howl like wolves and make the other cabins think the woods were haunted, which D.J. and all the younger girls instantly vetoed. However, when one girl got stung by a bee, Kimmy knew exactly how to treat it, and did so like a pro.

It didn't seem right to tell everyone Kimmy knew because she'd stuck her hand in a hive once. She had experience I hoped none of our girls would ever have.

Comic relief like this was great; most schools were changing from Junioe High to Middle School around the country; as you'll see later, that meant going a year earlier than D.J. had and changing schools. It was happening around the country.

D.J.:

Michelle wrote a postcard joking that she had to write it to get lunch. However, overall she was so good, I let this one girl teach Michelle to power spit. She was starting to earn lots of little privileges. She never spit at another person. She had very good self control about that and didn't evenneed threatened with timeout..

Caring for that rabbit a lot helped - I knew encouraging her to nurture others would be a major part of getting her to take more responsibility for her own actions, as well as for others. This was part of a trend that slowly helped her mature a lot.

Jesse - July 9 – Papouli's Wife Dies, Jesse's Dad's Heart Condition:

Becky and I went to Greece for my grandma's funeral while the girls were at camp; Becky stayed behind when Papouli died with the boys so young and more kids in the house to help watch, but also because it cost more to fly Papouli back, too.

Dad was sad; he'd had to cut back on his business. A week later, Dad went into the hospital for an angioplasty. He flat out told me he couldn't make it in his business ten more years, let alone fifteen. He planned to come back from this heart condition, and the doctor had given him something to avoid anger problems earlier, but a lot of the damage to his heart had been done. It was going to take quite a while to bring him back up to the level of health he wanted, although he could do it and would.

I wished I could find someone to take over for him. He lost quite a bit of business when he was sick. Even with Kimmy, I figured she'd do my dad's health more harm than good if she went to work for him after high school.

Stephanie - Aug. 8 – Hearing About Kathy Santoni:

Michelle was being a very obedient girl. I had met quite a few nice boys at camp. Just when things were going great, suddenly, I heard something startling.

I heard the usual way - I tried to listen in when Kimmy ran into the house and zoomed up to D.J.'s room shouting, "Deej, I just heard a bombshell."

I stood with a glass to the door trying to listen. Only this time, D.J. opened the door. As I grinned toothily, she pulled my face into the room with the rest of me. "Come on, Steph, if this is what I think it is you should hear it, too. You'll face these same temptations very soon," she said, slightly gruff yet loving.

The look on D.J.'s face shocked me. "You're not upset at my snooping, Deej?"

"Not this time." She pulled her diary out, and asked me to look at the card she had signed and attached to the front. "I made this pledge of purity this spring. If what Kimmy heard is what I think it is, then you're old enough to hear about now, too. I've heard of

eighth graders doing it, and what happened to Kathy could happen to a schoolmate of yours this year if they're not careful."

"What is it?" I wondered aloud, perplexed at D.J.'s tone.

"Kathy Santoni is pregnant," D.J. said, heaving a deep sigh. "A friend going into eleventh grade."

I gasped. "No. How can that be?"

"It can happen. It can happen the first time you do it. Steph, promise me two things. First, not a word to Dad for a while, he'll go nuts." I concurred. "Second, if you ever get talked into a make-out party, or if you don't feel comfortable with something else, call me. I'll come get you, and as long as you haven't gotten in any trouble, I promise never to tell Dad. Okay?" I agreed, though I was confused, unsure how bad it could be. "Good. Now, I will make sure you don't go back to one of those parties, but this is one thing where I'd rather you think you could go and leave without getting in trouble, instead of feeling you had to stay and do something you shouldn't."

I smiled, but the idea made me even more wary. Why couldn't they have kept the districts the way they were, and kept students in elementary school through sixth grade like D.J. was? Oh, well, I'd have to face it in seventh, anyway, I told myself.

Kimmy finally had the chance to speak. "I just found out today, Deej; how'd you hear about it?" she wanted to know.

"Remember yesterday when she was shopping for baby clothes?"

"Oh. Is that what she was doing? She must have been trying to hide it when I saw her in the mall last spring. She said she was getting a home pregnancy kit for her cat."

I couldn't help but laugh. "Kimmy, this is one time when I'm glad you're here to lighten the mood."

D.J. - Aug. 26 – Thought's on Kathy Santoni:

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Kathy being married was freaky; she was sixteen. She hadn't known how old the guy was or anything. She only loved his looks and wanted to give the baby two parents. It didn't last. It was so absurd I couldn't believe it. I'd had talks with Steph about what Kathy had done. Aunt Becky and I reiterated a few things. We discussed the facts of life with her more, as Dad talked about birds and bees, but got too nervous to go any further than those creatures once.

Kathy's younger sister was starting down a bad road. At least she and her club, the Flamingoes, wouldn't be in Steph's school.[335] She might have been if they'd drawn the lines differently. Since she wouldn't bug Steph, I didn't feel as protective, so I remained friends with Kathy. Still, I gave a fair amount of the job to Grandma Irene.

It was bizarre to think of a friend being pregnant, but it was also so sad; her life would never be the same. She was due at the beginning of October, but wanted all her presents to come in before school started - if she could get through school. Kimmy was even stunned – at her weirdest, she didn't think about things like that. She liked to talk about kissing, but she'd never think of going any further.

7- 2 The Apartment Aug. 30, 1993

[335] A snobby clique who are Steph's archrivals in the Book Universe. Wishing to protect Stephanie from that is why D.J. calls Kathy a "sk-nk" in the first book. Once the Flamingoes' meanest behavior is past, and they and Steph become friends, D.J. and Kathy would reconcile.

Steve – On his apartment, and the driveway:

I'd moved into an apartment since starting college in August. I had to move back home around the first of the year when expenses got too tight. For the same reason, Jesse and Joey wouldn't cement the driveway, just renting that stuff cost a lot, so they never did it, though they joked about what silliness could result.[336]

Joey – Choosing to Only Watch Wholesome TV, Steph's Video:

I always watched only the good cartoons normally. But, a few weeks ago, I got into a bad habit. I watched a cartoon with vulgar jokes that, by our standards, wasn't for anyone. I gave the excuse it helped me relax, but I knew the one cartoon, all of MTV – which used to be only music videos – and lots of things were getting too vulgar, with too much emphasis on unclean humor. It wasn't as fun.

Stephanie's videos - which we let her use in school, embarrassing as they were – helped me see the fun of everyday life. I hadn't watch a lot of that show, but when we talked about it as a family, it helped me realize what was important, and that none of that innuendo, vulgarity, and so on, was good. Just because it was a cartoon didn't make it okay. I was grateful to Steph, in a funny way. I never watched that again.[337]

7- 3 Wrong-Way Tanner Sept. 4-18, 1993

Becky - Sept. 10 – Twins Get First Timeout at 22 Months:

Michelle didn't even understand parents were supposed to teach their children right from wrong.[338] Any normal child of almost seven would know that. She's so blunt she would have told us long before now if she was upset by how Nicky and Alex were behaving. She was confused because her uncle was their dad, or more likely because they didn't have a big sister like D.J..

The boys were twenty-two months, and getting like Michelle before D.J. started putting her in timeout. They were younger, but there were two of them so it made sense.

I knew Jesse was scared of becoming his dad; he didn't want to start screaming or have his boys think he was mean if he punished them. But, I also knew what happened when Danny was given leeway - he didn't punish Michelle till she was almost four.

I didn't want to wait long. If I had to discipline, I'd start, but I wasn't going to let Jesse make me do it all. He started punishing a couple days later when he gave them their first timeout; I would have done it if he hadn't, but I'd wanted him to.

7- 4 Tough Love Sep. 10, 1993

Jesse - Home Visits for Adoption:

Kathy Santoni sounded certain about keeping her baby, but we signed up with an

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[336] "The Apartment" – The episode happens once school starts. It would take over 2 weeks to fix damage from the cement mixer. So, that part was a joke & nothing was done with the driveway - several episodes must happen within a couple weeks of "The Apartment," especially "Fast Friends" which says it's been two weeks since school began. No repairs ever seem to be needed or made.

[337] Joey shows no interest in "Beavis and Butthead" otherwise, and the character would clearly shy away from it. It's possible that reference is a joke and he didn't really watch it, but this is more likely, as the joke can't be wiped out as easily as the driveway part. Joey doesn't always have great judgment, so he could have watched a few times, but would give it up fast.

[338] "Tough Love," she asks who taught kids right from wrong, like she isn't sure, but by near 7 she'd know.

adoption agency, just in case. We had a preliminary home visit next week. I was really worried, in the initial interview, what they'd think of my background.

As it turns out, they don't care about details as much as how you deal with stuff. They were impressed with how I'd improved – the social worker was reinded of the Fonz on "Happy Days" adopting; the posititves in me were quite similar. We explained the situation, and why we were interested in it. If this didn't work out, we'd like to keep our names on the list, but that it wasn't a rush.

Then, I got the Smash Club, and we told the agency to put us on hold, because adoption ordinarily costs money, unless you get an older kid – that is, not a baby – who's been in the system. Then, in some places they give you help.

Still, we had enough by next spring, once some money started coming from the Smash Club, we stayed in the system for babies, and tried on our own, to see what would happen first; we knew it might take longer naturally, with Becky in her thirties.

D.J.: Sept. 12, 1993 – Michelle sticks up for her cousins; Watching Aaron:

Michelle was lost in thought this evening. "Penny for your thoughts," I said cheerfully as I sat next to her and put an arm around her.

Michelle looked up at me with very sad eyes and asked, "You know when I was being really bad, what we talked about?" I hugged and kissed her, I told her I knew exactly what she meant. "You'd never do that to Nicky and Alex, right?"

"No, they're a lot younger. I don't think it would help. Michelle, I waited as long as I could. I tried everything else with you. I found stuff that worked, so we didn't have to do that. They won't be two for two months. And, everything takes a while at their age. Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky are overwhelmed at times. Plus, with two of them, that's twice the bad ideas, and they influence each other. We were lucky. You didn't get into near as much stuff at age one as they do. He figured he could pay less attention to Nicky and Alex. Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky don't believe in that. They'll get our cousins to behave without it, just like I did you," I reassured her.

After a moment, Michelle asked, "Can I talk to them first if it gets that bad?"

I knew it wouldn't get that bad. I'd been advised even the mention of spanking, in a house where it was never considered otherwise, was a real shock, so she'd want to make sure it didn't happen. "That's a question for Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky. But, I'm sure they'd let you. It's always good to talk about things before it gets real bad." Michelle got up and thanked me, confident it wouldn't be a problem. She knew just how to behave, and so would they. With a head start with discipline, she figured they wouldn't get as wild as she got. It was great that, though I wasn't actively being Mom-like now, she could still trust me, as an oldest sister, to help like that.

It wasn't fun to think about that, but it showed how even Michelle was learning how to help others who need it. It's no wonder the social worker liked our family.

Michelle had also thought about it because she'd told Dad Aaron's mom needed a backup sitter for a few days, and Dad overconfidently said they could. We didn't have too many problems, but there were a few times Michelle knew he would have gotten in really big trouble with me. This only lasted till Friday when the sitter came back from a trip; the real reason we'd watched her. Dad only made the joke about the sitter twitching after Aaron ran around yelling like a maniac at first.

Danny – School redistricting in "Fast Friends" a national trend:

Many districts throughout the country were going from Junior Highs - 7-8th or 7-9th grades - to Middle Schools starting in 6th. With sixth graders going through puberty faster and having more teenage problems, they should be split from elementary school kids. Sixth graders had been moved for the 1991-92 school year, as part of the plan. That's why there was a slightly earlier end to the year, to give them an extra week to change some things. Ninth graders began to be in middle schools, too, this year.

Stephanie - Sept. 16 – New friends:

I was still in a strange new world. I didn't know what to expect, especially after D.J.'s warnings about Kathy Santoni. I was just too anxious to be at that "next level" that D.J. always made seem so awesome; I didn't realize for a few years why she'd done so, the stress she was under with Dad not disciplining Michelle.

I'd quickly signed up to be a member of Students Against Driving Drunk when I arrived at DiMaggio. Years later, I was part of a group that helped change the format of S.A.D.D. to cover lots of problem behavior. We even got it renamed Students Against Destructive Decisions. Mickey, my new friend, joined, too.

She also wanted to cut down on smoking, and requested my help.

As it turned out, I'd counsel her and even Gia regarding that, and Gia for a few other things. It wasn't uncommon for one to call out of the blue when they felt tempted to light up. And Gia - well, I didn't know it at the time, but she was a mess.

Danny:

You know those times when you say, "I know what I should have said" a few minutes after you say something? I had one of those when I first met Mickey. I should have launched into a pep talk about Stephanie being a born leader and how I was sure that she would be able to trim those rough edges around her friend without any of us ever worrying about Stephanie being led astray herself.

Then again, Becky told me later that would have been putting too much pressure on her. I still didn't have a grasp on this teenage thing.

I intended to attempt a talk like that with Stephanie anyway. "Guys, can you help me talk to her?" I requested. "And, please, tell me when I say something dumb."

"The way these things go sometimes, I'd say when you open your mouth," Jesse teased. Joey interrupted, saying I might hear enough of that from Stephanie herself.

Joey:

In the end, I was the voice of reason, something Jesse called "freaky." Basically, I told Steph what her dad and Jesse were trying to say was that she knew her boundaries, and that these weren't just boundaries because we said they were. They were boundaries because there was a right and wrong that we always followed.

Mickey called her mom by her first name - so what, I said? Some families would have me called "Uncle Joey." Becky even wanted to encourage their boys to do that. The question was, was she treating her with the respect she deserved as a mother.

More importantly, if she viewed someone who she called by their first name with respect and obeyed them, could Stephanie be in a similar position to her mom and still be a friend? Of course. That didn't mean it was always right; she was usually Miss

Stephanie as a PA, but sometimes you had to go with the hand you were dealt.

Stephanie:

Joey made some excellent points. Once someone understood Mickey, I was more willing to listen. Communication is a two-way street, and there were times that Dad talked at people rather than discussing things with them. He was still pretty good at discussing things, but he got agitated way too easily at times. Mom was very excitable, too, just like me. I guess I just assumed she wouldn't have gotten quite that hyper.

Dad was really glad to see me helping Mickey, but we didn't develop as close a friendship as I would with Gia later. I encouraged Mickey to get involved in a number of different activities, such as volleyball, softball, and tennis. She was really good at those. However, while I attended some games, I wasn't that into sports anymore. I wasn't as dominant, boys were more interesting, and next year the baseball strike would rob me of some of the joy of my favorite sport for a while. Plus, she was in a higher grade. Finally, she met a boy at the Smash Club later, and they hit it off fast.

We remained friends. She needed a friend like me, and a larger support network. Her mom never really developed into more than a big sister, because of some problems early in her life. Actually, she'd been a teen mom like Kathy.

Still, I helped steer her in the right direction. And, that's what mattered.

7- 6 Smash Club: the Next Generation	Sept. 20-5, 1993
7- 7 High Anxiety	Oct. 4-5, 1993

Becky – Sat., Oct. 17 - Family Albums, Talking About Kathy, and Growing Up Fast:

"Hey, what have you got?" I asked rhetorically after putting the boys down for their naps. "You like looking through albums, huh, Michelle?" She nodded. I sat next to her on the couch, and scanned the library of albums and videos on the far wall, opposite the staircase that led upstairs. "You have so many happy memories."

"I know." D.J. and Steve came in at that moment, with Steve going to the kitchen. "Hi, D.J.; how was your friend and her baby?" Michelle asked.

"Oh, fine, Michelle. We had a blast."

I could tell D.J. felt a little down. "Do you want to talk about it?" I asked.

"No, I think Michelle's got the right idea." D.J. sat on the other side of her. "It's great to look at a family where we do things in the right order."

Michelle didn't pay attention to the comment; she was looking at a picture of Stephanie and a doll. Michelle figured she was almost nine in the photo, and asked, "Isn't that too old to play with dolls?"

D.J. shook her head. "Michelle, never think you're too old to do kid stuff. Okay?"

"I think I know why D.J. said that," I said in response to Michelle's puzzled look. "You know, if you didn't tell her whose baby it was, I think you should."

"You're right, Aunt Becky." D.J. thought for a second, trying to figure out how to do that on Michelle's level – she was very caring, but had a habit of talking over her head at times. "Michelle…the one I've helped with her baby the last few weeks tried to grow up too fast. Her name is Kathy Santoni. She's my age." Michelle got that familiar shocked look, where her eyes bulge and her mouth is like the opening to a birdhouse. "I've hidden most of my disappointment at her, for the baby's sake. I'm not as protective as I might have been, since her younger sister's not in Steph's school."

"I thought your friend was in college!" She recalled that Pam was college age when she'd had D.J.. "How did she do that?"

D.J.'s look begged me to answer. I did. "There was other stuff she did too fast, too. She wanted to kiss boys," I said, eliciting a grossed out face, "make out, all sorts of things way before she should. It wasn't the baby's fault, so she gave birth, and decided to raise the baby herself. We offered to adopt," I explained. "She knows the offer is still open. She married the boy, but even that might not work out."

"But if she's your age, D.J., she's still in school," Michelle insisted.

"I know. At times, I worry you could be like that. I mean, Steph tried to be like me, but she was willing to do what you call 'little girl' things at your age and older. Play with dolls, watch cartoons, that sort of thing. I've told her several times, like when she borrowed all my clothes, don't be in such a hurry," D.J. said.

"I'm glad you chose to let your dad show fatherly affection and hug and kiss you. That's the kind of tenderness to think about now, not the kind with boys," I added.

"Do other girls do that?" Michelle asked incredulously.

"Yes. Sometimes they want to seem grown up." I tried to think of how to explain the next part. "Some don't have the family love we do. They try to replace it. But, what they feel for a boy isn't true love, like your Uncle Jesse and I feel. It's lust; that means it's just a feeling, and it'll change. I'm not saying it was wrong for Kathy to marry – but people need to marry because they love each other and they are committed to settling down together forever. No matter what. D.J. and Steve enjoy each other's company," I said as Steve came back. "But, they know marriage is a long way off," I concluded.

Steve:

I liked helping Michelle, but I wasn't used to being around girls. Still, by now I felt confident as Becky filled me in on the discussion.

I agreed, and added something else. "Some girls put themselves in the wrong place. Kathy did it on purpose, but some …well, take D.J. and me. When we were alone in my apartment, she made a very good choice. I turned the lights off and we started to snuggle. She didn't feel right, so she got up, turned them on, and we watched a movie without getting cozy instead. I see now where what she did was the only right thing to do. Neither of us wanted that snuggling to lead to…well," I said, not wanting to go too far. I wanted to protect kids like Michelle.

"It's okay, Steve. She saw my 'True Love Waits' pledge card while snooping in my latest diary. Dad and Aunt Becky have had the program's founders on their show. That's what Steve's talking about," D.J. explained. Michelle understood, and recalled that it had something to do with not making babies. The concept was very foreign, though, since she didn't think about it much. Once they started having more talks about that, it would be mostly D.J. and their Aunt Becky talking, though some was their dad.

D.J. had convinced me to make that commitment, too. All the kids in their family would do so in time. But, for now Michelle only knew D.J. was physically able to have a baby but had pledged not to.

"I thought you just had to be careful about strangers taking you."

"There's a lot more to think about, the older you get, Michelle," Becky said.

Michelle thought for a second. The Jesse influence was very strong in some areas, and that included not wanting to be childlike. However, I could see the wheels turning in

her mind. “If there’s that much to it, I want to stay little. I’m still not playing with dolls,” Michelle insisted. “But, I’ll play with Nicky and Alex a lot.”

“That’s wonderful. They love having you to play with,” Becky agreed. “I’ve had a similar talk lately with Steph, about playing with you more. I know you girls haven’t had the mothering influence. Jesse’s macho image has worn off on both of you. But, it’s important to learn to enjoy the simpler things in life, too.”

“That’s right, Michelle. And, if you ever have a problem, you can come to me just as easily as anyone else in your family,” I said. Noticing Mr. Tanner had been listening in for a couple minutes, I said, “Well, very extended family.”

Michelle smiled, wanting to see what her dad said. “He’ll make a nice brother-in-law.” She giggled as D.J. and Becky tickled her and reminded her about not rushing.

7- 8 Another Opening, Another No Show Oct. 29-30, 1993

Jesse - Oct. 31:

I’d been told to figure on over a month remodeling the Smash Club before its grand reopening. It was a mess, but with lots of hard work, we did it.

I got a loan and we managed a decent opening night. I had money, but for a huge investment like this, I needed financing, even without rent or house payments. Money from my hit was coming in slowly. The radio show helped, but I split that money with Joey. And, Becky and I wanted to put money away for the boys’ college. Finally, while Becky might have been able to go into it with me, I admit I was a little selfish and wanted it to be with my financing; she’d become co-owner later.[339]

I still felt awed as the owner. There was just one hitch. I’d never allow drinking there. So, I needed a way to keep money rolling in. I could afford a tiny loss this year, but didn’t want a huge one, and wanted a profit by next year. The cappuccino machine was a big help, but there had to be something else to keep people coming back.

Thankfully, I had teens and preteens to advise me. Steph and D.J. gave me very helpful hints, like a teen fashion show with sensible clothing - not flashy stuff with too much showing - once in a while. It would just be what they were wearing. We could host things of interest to teens - I was even willing to give job fairs a try.

In the end, I hired a cook to make pizza, and greatly expanded the menu. Later, we made a connection to Anthony’s Pizza - a joint venture where they supplied food and we helped them advertise. We also added a bit more comedy, to make sure we stayed competitive, which we did.[340] And, I made it work. I didn’t even have to have a retro theme, although I had looked into turning it into a ‘50s club. It would have been a great way to teach the younger generation to appreciate the history of rock and roll.

7- 9 The Day of the Rhino Nov. 2-9, 1993

Michelle – Nov. 10 - Looking up to Stephanie:

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[339] The will also said he had to get a loan, which means it wouldn’t matter whether he could pay or not, but the work to fix it up probably meant it was needed, anyway.

[340] Fans felt only this would be needed - with what’s mentioned later in the post-TV years - to stay in business, rather than a sports club or something else. An emphasis on comedy is quite likely, as that, too, allows them a little variety. Anthony’s is a staple of teen life in books, it exists in the TV Universe, too, though never named. The end of “The Heartbreak Kid” is the most likely of numerous places it could be implied. Since Jesse already had the cappuccino machine, an expanded menu is very likely.

That first day of Kindergarten was special, but that was just one reason why Steph was so special to me. I looked up to Stephanie because she always tried to encourage me, including when Denise and I tried to stand up for our rights with the little bath toys or whatever we got sent to us, instead of the big stuffed rhinos we got. Stephanie hated to see people get ripped off; she expected people to follow the rules and do what was right. I really learned a lot from her.

Even if D.J. had been more proactive, Steph and I were closer in age. I mostly went to her with questions and concerns. I liked being around her. She was closer to a friend, though she always supported and helped D.J. discipline me. Even then, I knew her heart broke just like mine when D.J. really had to scold me. I knew I'd get a big hug from D.J., but Stephanie was one of the first ones I'd tell afterward. She'd cuddle me just like Uncle Jesse had. She hated to see anything bad happen to me.

7-10 The Prying Game Nov. 12, 1993

D.J. – Nov. 16 – Doctor's Advice, Things Resulting from Danny Ignoring:

At Michelle's yearly checkup, she excitedly told him about Vicki. Dad praised Michelle's major improvement. Michelle said I was very loving, even at my toughest. "D.J. wants to help me be good and follow the rules," she said contritely. She blushed slightly, but wasn't really uncomfortable, as she and Dad told the story. I always let her decide who would know if I'd threatened to spank her.

"So, after that, your Dad started to be the one to discipline you again?"

"She kept an eye on me for a while," Michelle admitted lowly. "D.J. just said she'd do that 'cause she loves me. And, she doesn't want me to be a rebel like our Uncle Jesse. Now I obey Daddy real well. I'd rather obey him than D.J.."

"It sounds like you behave very well now," the doctor said.

They talked more, then he motioned Dad to the side of the room, signaling to talk so Michelle couldn't hear; she was getting dressed and had a book to read.

He said simply, "Mr. Tanner, you have a very good girl."

"Thanks," he said, bragging too fast. "She's always been nice; she takes after me. Uh, what she was saying just now, after we told about her imporvment…?"

"Mr. Tanner," he said with a sigh, "she sees you as a major authority figure. She will obey you well. But…it appears her ultimate authority is D.J.. And, I doubt that's going to change much. She's learned to always obey the rules, but that consistency wasn't there for her to learn to count on you to always teach her right from wrong."

"So…I don't understand. What if D.J. goes away to college? I mean…"

"Mr. Tanner, Michelle wants to obey you. She'd rather listen to you. She knows you won't like it if she doesn't. But, while you could have recovered by being totally consistent, she obeys you like a child obeys an uncle. A beloved one," he emphasized, "who always tries to help. If you had an adult that you idolized and tried to copy, other than a parent, it would be like that." He agreed. It sounded like Uncle Jesse and Joey with us, in fact. "She will obey you. But, if there is any question, if she feels you're slacking off, she'll defer to D.J., so she doesn't get in trouble. If you waver, she won't take advantage, but only because D.J. will be upset."

Dad was crestfallen; he couldn't believe it. But, he knew we had to get through.

Dr. Landress – A Good Dad Otherwise:

"Like another dinosaur incident?" Mr. Tanner asked.

"Yes." I really felt he'd done well otherwise. I hated to bear bad news. But, the last year of ignoring, plus that promise, left little room. "Without the promise, you might have recovered. But, don't take it as a putdown. You've struggled with Pam's death. But, you are a very good father, and very good toward Michelle. You take great care of her other needs, and of your older daughters. Jesse and Joey weren't capable of being her ultimate authority for their own reasons. If D.J. didn't treat Michelle right, you'd have protected her by taking charge. Thankfully, you didn't have to."

He brightened. "Oh, certainly. If D.J. goes away to college, though, that main authority won't be there. Will she listen to me, or…?"

"She can come home weekends, even just on holidays, and Michelle wil do wonderfully; you have almost two years. Michelle had improved a lot these past months. She may not make good choices at times, because you haven't taught her to; talk now about choices she might have," I advised.

"You don't think she'll become another Jesse, do you? That's what D.J. fears."

I recalled some of their stories. "No. There may be arrogance from his influence and your omission. She may not respect you quite as much as she does D.J., and she may sass D.J. some, though that will be more like a normal child testing her mother. She might give a few more dirty looks, for instance."

Even that was never an issue, I said; and, it wouldn't be.

"Michelle will try to please you, because she loves you and feels you are always good to her. You're not like one parent of a patient I had. That parent slept around so much, that child had zero respect; she went to live with her older sister as a preteen, and turned out well. But, Michelle will be different. You're dedicated to your girls, and D.J. enforced that what you said was right. That entrenched it to her. You, in turn, said D.J. was making good rules. She knows you'll do what it takes." To soften the blow, I added, "Michelle's mature enough to have pity on you, which helps a lot."

"She does." He still felt a little lost. "So…what else do I do to help?"

"Help her make good choices, and let her live with the consequences if it isn't too bad, while she's young enough that her choices don't matter as much. And, I mean even when it seems awkward. Because, truthfully, I think you're still a little lost without your wife." He got choked up. I could tell he didn't want to say it, but he was.

7-11 The Bicycle Thief Nov. 23, 1993

D.J. – Tues, Nov. 23 – Blaming others disappears fast:

Michelle had minor issues in trying to get attention because of Dad's laxness. She automatically thought people stole stuff she'd misplaced. That stopped fast because Uncle Jesse talked to her, and I said if it kept up, I'd remove dessert each time. She got ice cream that day because Dad took us all out, but I ensured she got no dessert that night. Losing dessert still worked wonders with her. So, we had no more problems.

However, that was just part of a general pattern. As Dad started to help her make more choices, and accept the consequences of those choices, that disappeared. If I'd taken charge totally, it would have disappeared faster, but I wanted Dad and the others to do it.

Michelle – Some attitude because of being youngest in class:

A big problem was also that I was the youngest in my class. It was nothing bad. It

was just me feeling I had to act more like a know-it-all to compete.

Most of that was still Uncle Jesse's influence. With D.J. as a role model, I'd have never felt that need; I'd be more of a leader. As it was, it took me a few years to get used to being the youngest in my class. By fourth grade I was fine, though.

7-12 Support Your Local Parents Nov. 30, 1993

Jesse – Dec. 11:

We were more than happy to let Stephanie watch Nicky and Alex. We'd only be gone for a little over an hour, and she'd done everything when Kimmy watched one time, anyway. It wasn't even as tough with Michelle there, because they were doing a simple bedtime routine – or so they thought.

Steph had to chase them around like crazy, till she got them to get their pajamas on. At only twenty-five months old, they couldn't have many privileges removed, but dessert was a possibility since it would have been right after they got them on; however, timeout worked best at that age. Stephanie said she'd put them in timeout if they didn't sit on the bed and settle, and then they obeyed. She finally got them corralled and in bed, getting them to sleep just as we got home, and Danny revealed that he and Vicki had broken up; she was taking the job in New York.

Michelle wasn't quite mature enough to know automatically that this meant D.J. would be watching since Danny wasn't up to it. However, after they talked about it a while, D.J. promised, "We'll be here for you, Dad." Squeezing Michelle's shoulder and smiling down at her, she added confidently, "I know we won't have any problems."

7-13 The Perfect Couple Dec. 11, 1993

Danny - Dec. 25, 1993 – Breaking up with Vicki:

I was so excited about Vicki, I got Christmas decorations out two weeks early, on December 10th, for a change. I really thought Vicki was the one. She took a job offer she got to be an anchor on CNN in New York, though, so we broke up.

I resolved that I wasn't going to be as regimented as after other losses. I went the other way entirely, rearranging everything. But, we had a normal Christmas. It was great watching Nicky and Alex. They were old enough to really go crazy over it this year.

We left for my mom's on the 26th. The girls loved spending time in New England, because they got to see snow. The kids had lots of fun building snowmen and everything. That took my mind off Vicki a little.

Still, with me sad about Vicki, I let D.J. help with Michelle again. I'd have let go for a few weeks, and someone – okay, D.J. - would have had to step in to help anyway. Now, Michelle wouldn't try anything - a loving big sister held the reins, ready to react sternly if she was way out of line.

Michelle had "bad ideas," but D.J. had worked enough those ideas really weighed on her conscience. She didn't like that she'd thought about tricking me. At the Christmas Eve service, Michelle trusted Christ as her Savior. I think she was readier soon after her accident, but whichever time she understood, she was sure of going to Heaven. And, she may have here. After all, D.J. was super busy studying for the SAT. She didn't watch her closely, yet Michelle didn't take advantage of my laxness. Like with Jesse, there'd been a change, if that was when she believed and was changed on the inside.

With kids, it's hard to notice because the change is smaller; they usually haven't

been really wild. That's why you don't insist they got saved if later they say they need to; it's hard for them to be sure at a younger age. They also can go forward, but not totally understand the concept. Michelle behavior had improved drastically, but the person's heart is what counts, because there needs to be repentance. Was there a change in her heart? That's harder to say, it was there, but clearer after camp in 1995.

Becky: D.J.'s, Kimmy's Test Scores, Comet Barking:

D.J. was extra thankful because she was studying so much. She got a 1320, Kimmy really didn't much hope, but took it anyway. She got about half that.

Kimmy thought she could be a dog trainer, though. She came up with the idea of trying to show Comet when to bark by barking at the right time. It didn't work on her dog, either. Kimmy's barked more, but some was because of that weird training idea.

Around this time, Comet barked because Kimmy literally barked at him. D.J. and I convinced her after the SAT test not to bark at Comet again. Once she stopped barking at him, he stopped. If necessary, we had the squirter we could still use, but we didn't have to. And, Comet really didn't bark much, anyway, only at times with new dogs.

7-14 Is It True about Stephanie?	Jan. 13-14, 1994
7-15 The Test	Jan. 21-22, 1994

Stephanie - Sun., Jan. 23, 1994 – Start of helping Gia:

For about a week, I'd been trying to build Gia up as a natural leader. I didn't know why, but when trying to encourage her that was the first thing that popped into my head. Maybe it was because people were always saying it about me.

Regardless, she didn't really buy into that. Mickey had left her orbit by then. Mickey had gravitated toward Gia because of that need for leadership since her mom was often closer to a big sister, but had known it was the wrong path. So, she didn't hang around Gia anymore, though she helped me a bit with Gia.

After a few long talks with Gia, like at my birthday party last weekend, Gia wanted to be a leader in the right way, and was starting to believe maybe she could be. That was important. It would hopefully make her want to give up some of her nasty habits, like acting like she owned the school sometimes.

I got her to join S.A.D.D. with me this semester. I wanted to get her into the yearbook or newspaper, but all she wanted to do was write gossip columns. D.J. and I spent part of Friday talking about the mistakes she'd made in expecting Kimmy to understand how to write a proper newspaper article.

D.J.:

When I saw Steph taking the lead with Gia, I was impressed. It seemed just like I had been with Kimmy. Gia was in much worse shape for the moment, though. Her parents had fought bitterly for years; their divorce had only been finalized recently.

Gia didn't care a lot about her future till her self-image improved. It would be a long road. Still, in the end Steph helped Gia stop smoking, got Gia to be more respectful toward her mom, and helped her improve her grades.[341]

Steph could still get a little too exuberant - it's part of Mom that's so distinctly hers. Thankfully, I was there to explain that to Gia today. She'd dropped by, after doing

[341] "Making Out Is Hard To Do"

some thinking, and told Stephanie she wanted to stop smoking, because of some of the things Steph had said in the last few days. When she heard Gia say that, Stephanie acted like she had just scored a touchdown to win the Super Bowl. Her reaction freaked Gia out, but they were able to get a good laugh out of it later.

Talking about our mom also helped Gia, over a period of weeks, to think about her own mother. She found it hard to fathom such a warm, loving situation at times. We had to get through that before we could help her see her mom was worthy of respect.

She couldn't keep Gia from failing - her grades improved a touch, but not nearly enough. Still, with Steph's help, Gia did start to have a better self-image.

Joey - Jan. 26 – Dating, Science, etc.:

I remembered what Jesse had told me about women with kids. So, I started to read up on science in my spare time. I hadn't recalled much about it when I tried out as Mr. Egghead, and wanted to broaden my interests to attract women like Jesse said.

It was frustrating at times to not find a good, steady girlfriend. I was in the middle of another relationship of only a few weeks. Several didn't enjoy my comedy, or felt too much pressure. And, some just disappeared.

I decided to be happy with what I had for a while. At least by the time I taught, it helped me mix activities with facts, like with experiments. I had a time travel idea to make the Revolutionary War come alive, along with the egg in the jar. a few dates really didn't care that I knew how to create a vacuum to suck an egg into a jar.[342]

The important thing was, I was loved as a father figure. But, though I slacked off in looking for love over the next year or so, I really wasn't too sad about it. I felt my time would come. And, it did, when I least expected it.

7-16 Joey's Funny Valentine Jan. 28-30, 1994

Stephanie – Jan. 30 – Doctor's Orders - Michelle making choices:

We got the latest in video cameras from Big Sid's. I'd worn out our old one. But, not before some fun lesson teaching like Dad had done other times.[343]

Dad followed Dr. Landress' earlier advice today. He let Michelle pick a gift from Big Sid's catalogue. It was perfect; there was no way to get us to compromise. Dad also helped her think of others; Michelle wanted video games, but he showed her that would be only thinking of herself, just like us. Michelle decided then that she wanted something so we'd always have memories. They brought a cardboard thing home to shock us into seeing we might not get anything thinking of ourselves. Only after we got over the shock did he bring out the new video camera.

Dad let her take money to the store this October, not knowing how much there was, when she got the donkey later; she was still doing the first thing that came to mind a little. She learned slowly her choices weren't always the best. If he hadn't been as sad,

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[342] "To Joey, With Love" - Joey had the egg in the jar experiment in his desk ready to pull out before Michelle apologized, so he'd have it the first day, too. Since he was her teacher all day (third graders always have the same teacher there), Michelle and he would have come to an understanding that day, helped by someone else if need be; they had hours. Danny would have gotten them to talk at home, if they hadn't, anyway, so it wouldn't last that long. Finally, Joey's smart enough to know learning can be fun by itself, he simply knew Michelle wanted the rowdy kind.

[343] This is most logical, and like one of Danny's lessons; title based on song title, not on Valentine's Day

she'd have learned to think earlier. Thankfully, it wasn't too late.

D.J. – Tues., Feb. 1 – The Radio Show For Teens: [344]

Uncle Jesse and Joey never could decide what to call the show where we talked with teens every Monday. Kimmy thought "Know-It-Alls" sounded good, but nobody else did. They had Steve on, or some other girl and Kimmy – they never wanted her on alone talking to teens - when I was too busy. We managed to do some neat things, till it was cancelled in May. Steve left the show once we broke up, and it was hard to find a guy with the skill to take over. We didn't want Kimmy answering boys' questions about relationships; she'd suggest a night with her.

For now, Uncle Jesse and Joey wanted something special to kick off February sweeps, as ratings were declining even now. So did Dad and Aunt Becky. When Kathy agreed to talk, along with another teen mom or two, it was perfect. They used Monday's show to advertise it, and had a special Tuesday version.

I was very pleased. Kathy had learned that her inability to control her desires was nothing to be proud of; you have to in life. We'd all worked teaching Michelle that. Thankfully, all my sisters and their friends knew and followed that advice.

Joey – The Special Show and the Award(s):

Kathy and a couple other teen moms came on and talked about what it was like to be a teen mother. We opened lots of eyes. That wasn't enough to save "Teen Talk," as we didn't have lots of listeners on a weekly basis, but it gave us another month or two.

Jesse and I couldn't believe it when our shows were up for an award. Danny and Becky covered it this same day. All four of us were excited; we didn't care that we were competing against each other. Danny got more nervous, so Becky did a fair amount of the background work beforehand, one reason why she got promoted later.[345]

Danny – Sharing a Great Moment:

As it turned out, "Wake Up San Francisco" and "Teen Talk" shared top honors.

We were really proud of the award, one of few any of us won,[346] and, of Kathy. She knew she never should have chanced it; it really pays to wait. She got the message across very well, which is why she was able to help Gia.

This was one of my most thrilling days as a journalist. It was D.J.'s favorite moment in the field, too, given how she grew to dislike it. This let us really help lots of people; that's what she thought journalism was about. D.J. had deeloped the idea after discussing things Kathy was going through. She felt lots of pressure; we knew there were things she'd experienced that other teens needed to know.

Indeed, D.J. felt it important to get out the message about staying pure, too. And, then there was the notion that what Kathy had wanted wasn't love, it was just instant gratification. "Up and At 'Em, Oakland" was looking to do something similar, so it's a good thing we had the chance, or they would have won the award.

We got lots of favorable response, even from the really conservative like me. After all, Kathy was telling everyone that it wasn't glamorous at all.

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[344] The show from "Fast Friends" can still go on a while when we don't see

[345] "The Producer"

[346] "Five's a Crowd" – where D.J.'s not as close to Kathy, they do win in the Book Universe.

Jesse – Sat. Feb. 5 – Papouli's death, and where was Nick?:

Michelle had wanted to go in and wake Papouli up in Joey's room; we let him have Joey's since Joey was willing to sleep on the couch. I figured he'd need some sleep with the jet lag and all. I'm really glad I stopped her. She had a Honeybee club meeting this morning, so she wasn't there when I went in to see him around eleven.

It wasn't as rough as Pam's death, and yet it was. Sure, he was a lot older, and had lived a long and fruitful life. Still, I kept asking myself if there were some warning signs of a heart attack that I missed. You never like to see anyone die.

Danny had come up to ask what we wanted for lunch, and he heard me sobbing. I quickly told him not to start crying, or I wouldn't be able to handle it – it was bad enough as it was without all of us starting all over again; that would have reminded me more of Pam. As if turns out, Steph overheard me saying that and tried to be too brave.

We all gathered around the kitchen table, and it was hard to know what to say. I just tried to handle everything, because I knew that would take my mind off it.

My dad had recovered very slowly from his angioplasty. He had been cautioned to continue taking it easy for a while, and my mom had to help take care of him some yet. Of course, I probably would have pushed him out of the way even if he were completely healthy; I always had to work to take my mind off things.

Michelle - Tues., Feb. 8:

Papouli had lost his wife a little over a half year earlier. I loved him the moment he came, even though he was a little forgetful. He loved to celebrate. It reminded me of what I was told our mom always said, "Give away a smile, it's free."

I learned about him dying after my Honeybee Club meeting. He'd had spells in November and December. I asked Dad, if he'd come over Thanksgiving instead, could we have convinced him to go to the hospital? Would it have helped?

Dad said one couldn't tell with something like that. Papouli had loved his wife so much; maybe he was just ready to go be with her. Dad said if Papouli thought he had something that he had to live for, though, he might have made it. He should know - he'd felt awful about losing our Mom, but kept going because of us.

I guess I was still like Uncle Jesse. I didn't always talk about things like I should. I didn't go to anyone, I'd just told the school nurse I felt bad and walked home. I still had a touch of an attitude, though nothing like I'd had.

Dad and Joey got this huge boat, too. We weren't right next to the Bay, so I wasn't sure what they would do with it. And then, as fast as they got it, they got rid of it. I figured they either realized they wouldn't have time to use it, or they were just broke.

Jesse - Feb. 14 – Thinking About Valentine's Day:

Becky stayed because of expense in flying Papouli back and with the boys so young yet. I'd ordered a special gift for her with a deluxe spa package. I called when I thought the mail would come; she'd just opened the elegant items that I knew would amaze her, like that bed and breakfast a couple years earlier.[347] I used to think Elvis'

[347] Both gifts are mentioned in "Dateless In San Francisco," as is how he'd grown to love it

birthday was the best day of the year. Since we got married, I've come to realize how special Valentine's Day can really be, as it's grown so special to me, though I liked to tease sometimes. I wished I could be home for it.

Another thing I wished was that Melina, her dad, and her new mom had warned me about Stavros. He was one of two boys my Aunt Larissa gave birth to. Stavros had very adeptly avoided his brother during the funeral and all. He convinced me to let him come back with me from Greece, then.

As it turned out, when Dmitri's first wife left him, Stavros invented this get rich quick scheme. It made Dmitri go broke, so he and Milina lived with Papouli and Gina for a bit. Of course, Dmitri met a very nice woman who became a great mom to Melina. Still, Stavros had bilked them, and I didn't find out what a con man he was till he'd been in the U.S. with me for a few days. Stavros hadn't told anyone where he was going.

Joey - Feb. 15 - That boat in "The Last Dance":

Danny and I had talked about owning a boat for years. But, my love for Popeye was the only big reason, and Danny thought about Vicki and even about Pam. I think he knew it was a luxury he didn't need. It was the last remnant of the changes he tried to make after breaking up with Vicki, brought on by having Papouli die like that.

We sold the boat today to young couple whose maternal grandfather was from China. They understood why we'd named it Papouli and the reason we'd bought it.

If Jesse hadn't owned the Smash Club we might have kept it. But, after calling him in Greece and talking on the 12th, we agreed that in case the Smash Club took a loss this year, we should sell the boat, so we could help Jesse. After all, their income was part of our whole family's.

7-18 Kissing Cousins Feb. 21-25, 1994

Kimmy – Clown College:

Like D.J., I tried to expand my horizons, but in odd ways. Barking at Comet to see if I could be an animal trainer was one of my stranger ones. I also looked into clown college like Garth.[348] I had trouble keeping jobs, but I had to be good at something;.

Danny – Tues., Mar. 1 – Jesse Teaching Michelle to Tell Time:

Michelle was torn between wanting to rely on others, and being more grown up.

She wasn't behind in school, but I had pushed her because of our schedules. I began to think putting her in Kindergarten when she was five, and not four, might have been better. She was doing well for her age level, but only because Steph worked with her. I'd never hold her back now that she was there, as she didn't need that. I was just hard on myself when I saw maybe things didn't work out as well as I'd hoped they would. Like when I hadn't managed to discipline her well.

Jesse taught her to tell time, and had a heart to heart talk about her attitude toward learning, period. That's when she decided to learn to tell time, finally.

Jesse – Heart to heart talk about learning:

I still needed something to do with Papouli gone, so Michelle and I sat down and

[348] Earlier, it's mentioned he went there, and D.J. worried about it in her dream in "The Test" – seemingly because she and Kimmy swapped places in everything.

had a heart to heart talk about the effort she was putting forth.

"Hey, munchkin, I know you've enjoyed havin' us do stuff for you all the time."

"Especially Daddy."

"Yeah," I conceded, "he loves to tell you what time it is, doesn't he? 'Cause he misses your mom so much, it's just one more way to keep thinking of you as the precious little baby you were when she died. Well, not that you are a baby, but…" At that point, I told myself to just run with what I'd said. "But, you want to be a big girl, right?"

"Of course."

"I know you've thought about telling time before," I informed her, cuddling her in my lap and putting one of Steph's old watches on her wrist. "And, your dad's always been so quick to just do it all for you. But, everyone tells time."

"I guess so." She didn't seem certain – I could tell it was a struggle between wanting to be little and protected, and wanting to be more grown up.

"Look, there's always gonna be times when you can be coddled and you don't have to do a lot of work. But, what does Steph always say when she's helping you with your schoolwork?"

"If you don't do the work, you end up like Kimmy?"

I'd forgotten that part. "Okay, besides that," I said, holding up a finger. "She says she wants you to grow up to be intelligent and have a bright future just like she and D.J. do. Look; what did you do in school today?" She shrugged. "What do you remember?"

"We had fun at recess."

"See, this is just what I mean; when Steph was your age, she'd come home and wouldn't stop talking about her day. Sure, she talked about recess, or the lunch menu. And, she talked about what everyone was wearing. In fact, she rambled like your dad; let's use D.J., okay." We laughed for a moment. "No, seriously, your sisters both knew learning could be fun. Not silly fun, but exciting fun. You're startin' to remind me too much of myself." I lowered my head. "I wasn't very happy about learning; I didn't see the worth in it. Part of that was my dad pushing me ahead too fast, just because your mom could do it. But, part of it was, I never learned how much fun it was."

"Is that why you had to go back?"

"Yeah, that's why I had to go back. It can be fun to know stuff."

"But it takes work. And, I'd rather be playing."

With a sad smile, I replied, "You know who that sounds like, don't you?"

"You?" she asked evenly.

"You bet. You think you got homework now, you look at your sisters' stuff, you ain't seen nothin' yet. But, if you don't start putting the effort into reading better and math and stuff, one of these days we won't have time to help, and you'll be stuck. You gotta have the attitude that they've always had."

"But I'm not them, I'm me."

"Yeah, but now, you're not bein' you, you're bein' me, right?" She said she'd have to think about that one. "Tell you what; while you're thinking, let's start to work on telling time. Only this time, you do the work in trying to do it. And we're going to have fun doing it together. Because you have to start now with the attitude that you want to succeed, so it's not so hard to pick up that habit later. Capiche?"

"Capiche."

In just a day or two, she was telling time really well. And, she paid more attention

to learning in school, too. I saw where my attitude had led, and hoped I wouldn't repeat the mistake with Nicky and Alex. I didn't.

7-19 Love on the Rocks Mar. 4-5, 1994

Michelle – Steve Always Good At Science, Focus On Learning:

Another reason Steve and D.J. broke up had to do with learning; he'd always been good at science, as good as some doctors now that he was in community college. He just needed something to be passionate about; he'd learned to love that from a smart teacher showing how biology, chemistry, and so on were keys to being a champion wrestler.[349]

Becky - Mon., Mar. 7:

Jesse and I had a great laugh after Dmitri called. The first thing I thought was, we need to get e-mail. They'd begun to wonder about Stavros' whereabouts when he was still here. They suspected something might be fishy, given how Stavros did things. We raised lots of money for a local hospital, but we could have been spared some grief.

Danny was very reluctant to get the girls e-mail, however. He still worried a little too much at times. I agreed that good parental controls were necessary, but why couldn't one of us monitor things? Or, better yet, since D.J. had her computer and Jesse a small one he'd bought to do his papers, get another one and make it the family computer. We could put it in the alcove, and anyone who used it would be in plain site, so the girls couldn't be lured into anything bad without us knowing.

Danny – Michelle's, Stephanie's interests:

I might have done what Becky suggested if I wasn't so protective.

I did want to encourage my girls to try new things, though, so Michelle was allowed to try racing. She lost interest after this time, though. She tended to have slightly different interests than the others did because of Jesse, although she showed some interest in fashion. I just hoped she never wanted a motorcycle. She'd never get one – but I knew she'd choose a horse over that, and I really didn't want her to have a horse. She never bugged me for either, thankfully.

Despite her not showing lots of interest in sports, Steph still loved dance. She'd quit baseball last year, but while it can be played all year here, she'd only played it in the spring and summer, with dance in the fall and winter. Many middle school girls did in our area, and she did till high school. She even taught Joey some ballet moves.

7-20 Michelle a la Cart Mar. 11-19, 1994

D.J. – Steph's broken arm, Michelle much better, concerns about Kimmy:

Michelle's behavior had gotten so much better, I was certain if she was my only concern, I could easily leave home for college. She was very nice and helped Steph with lots of things after she got a hairline fracture of her arm. It wasn't serious, just typical of Stephanie trying to bridge that gap between childhood and adolescence. Steph challenged us to race to the car in a parking lot that we knew wasn't busy. Running full speed – and

[349] You need great grades to get intomedical school like in the series "Fuller House." His grades need not be awful, just bad enough in other subjects he never thought to try hard enough to get into a better school. He did seem to get into community college easily, so while it would take great effort, it's not impossible he could become a doctor, it's just outside of NetU, he doesn't feel the passion to try.

she was quite fast - she slipped on a piece of pizza someone dropped.

She was mad at herself, but as I said, it was one thing that really helped Michelle learn to take care of someone else with respect and dignity. Steph was quite thankful – Dad overdid it quite a bit, so she much preferred Michelle helping her when it came to dressing and such. Michelle was growing up big time.

However, Kimmy's grades still didn't seem good enough to get her into any college. The number of jobs she could take was dwindling fast. Part of me thought I should live at home for her.

Still, I figured something had to pick up for her. I even started asking some of my teachers and guidance counselors what they thought. They opined that even if Kimmy had a learning disorder, it was too late for assistance with it to really help her. And, in a sense, they were right; Kimmy had no desire to learn. She was satisfied with who she was. And, that was not a person who was going places.

That made me doubly happy for Gia, although she still needed watched. I thought we'd done a good job boosting her self-esteem, and she was improving quite a bit. Still, she wasn't interested in many activities, so this year was a lost cause except for S.A.D.D..

I pushed activities with Kimmy not only so we could do things together, but also because when we were in Junior High, Mrs. Myer told me if Kimmy's grades were only ordinary, she could still get into a lesser college with lots of extracurricular activities. It looked impossible for Kimmy now, but it could still happen for Gia. So, I told Steph to keep pushing those with Gia.

Becky – Tues. Mar. 22 – Kathy helps open Gia's eyes:

D.J. put a lot of unnecessary pressure on herself sometimes. It was like she knew she had responsibilities at home, and was scared she'd lose much more freedom. I kept telling her to embrace that chance to be a mother figure, but she didn't.

Stephanie, however, was doing great things for Mickey. You could tell Mickey really looked up to Stephanie. Gia started to, though she wasn't as interested in extra activities. She just wanted to hang out with boys. She did have a volunteer Big Sister - from the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program. When Stephanie finally got to know Gia, she insisted Gia get involved more with her Big Sister. Gia didn't do much in school yet, but at least she had some positive activities outside school.

Her match was Kirsten. She'd worked at the station. We suggested she join the program back then; she loved helping others. She'd matured a lot from when she dated Dad, and was a great positive influence, while she could also understand and help kids who were on the wilder side a little. We knew she could do this from when Dad dated her, as she'd not been too bad, but settled down and knew how to reach such youth.

Today, she, Steph, and Gia visited Kathy Santoni.

D.J.:

I was glad Kathy found a way to help someone. Her husband had left her. Kathy obtained a court order for support, but it came slowly, often not at all, till he had a job. [350] Talking to Kathy had been a real eye opener for Gia, concerning what could happen if she went too far with boys, though she wouldn't always think right away.

One thing that bugged Gia was that Kathy was struggling so much. Uncle Jesse

[350] He isn't mentioned in the books, only a boyfriend who fled and who Kathy wanted to call is mentioned.

and Aunt Becky had been willing and ready to do a private adoption with her before she gave birth, but Kathy wound up keeping her boy, Scott.

After a couple false starts, Gia was ready to try to quit smoking again. She had to go cold turkey, though, which would be tough for anyone. Steph had some clever ideas to help her remain sane through it all, though.

Michelle – Feelings about Gia:

I didn't hate Gia. But, Gia talked like I was Nicky or Alex. She didn't really grasp how to communicate. Plus, she was almost proud of how dumb she was. So, she and I traded one-liners, and got on each other's nerves, for fun till she started to behave later.

Still, she tried to be nice. She came up with several ideas that involved me that helped her quit. In one of them, Nicky, Alex, and I would show up at her house and sing Barney songs to her if she took a smoke. Gia just missed one important fact. I was already way too old for Barney.

D.J. – Fri., Mar. 25 - College choices:

I'd been bugging Dad for an account for weeks. I explained that it would really help when it came to college, and I needed to have access to search the Web. I thought Michelle and Steph could share my account till I went to college. I wasn't sure if I wanted to live at home or on campus - that really depended on where I went. I was lucky he got me a computer before high school started, though.

Stanford was the only place I yearned to attend; I had since we first visited Cousin Steve there in 1988. I'd likely have to live on campus, though I could make it home most weekends. Berkeley might mean living on campus - north of Oakland - but it was closer.

San Francisco State, where Dad and Joey went, would clearly let me live at home. I had other choices, too. I was especially impressed with Dad not pushing his school, but of course he also loved Stanford. It's one of the best in the country in many areas.

Joey:

Danny knew he pushed some things too much. He wouldn't have pushed D.J. to go to our college even if she hadn't wanted to go to Stanford, he wanted her to have her own life. However, the idea of Stanford really thrilled him.

D.J. could correct any problems much more easily living here. I think she worried Danny's inaction might cause another flare-up in Michelle's misbehavior. D.J. could still get a little too stressed, after all. Still, even that was getting better. Michelle's behavior was never a problem after that really bad time.

Jesse – Fri. April 1 – 1994 Rough Year, Alex's ER Visit:

This was a really rough year for us at first. Within a couple months, not only did Papouli die suddenly, Steph broke her arm, and while Danny was down in L.A. doing a few interviews for their show, Alex had to be taken to the ER to get one of those big bandages on his head, with some stitches underneath.[351]

It was scary for me because Michelle was good; except for a couple times, she wasn't physical when she played. The boys were different. They played rougher at times,

[351] He clearly had a bandage of some sort on his forehead in the following episode's teaser. Danny goes down a couple times in books, so here is likely, too; may tie in with later "Fuller House" job, too.

and our one trip to the ER was more serious than when we took Michelle the time she got a bean up her nose. The scariest part for me was, Becky and I went out to eat earlier that evening. So, that left Joey in charge of everything.

Stephanie – How It Happened:

That morning before school, Michelle pulled her usual stuff – hand buzzers, disappearing ink, and so on; it was with our help, of course, but she was getting to the point where next year, we might let her do them herself.

With Joey in charge that evening, he pondered calling the restaurant and saying Uncle Jesse had a call from the governor for the radio show. Before he could do that, something else happened. Nicky and Alex were racing around the living room like crazy, when Alex tripped over one of his toys and fell into the coffee table.

Michelle called for us – she'd been reading and went right over to him – but we could hear it, too. "Come quick, his head his bleeding," she cried.

D.J. and I rushed downstairs, and tried to help Joey stop the flow. He quickly told D.J. to get the car keys; he could tell this was a job for the ER doctors. I helped by trying to keep Alex calm while Michelle distracted Nicky. Thankfully, none of us fainted at the sight of blood. I was pretty anxious, but I'd gotten better at hiding that.

We debated whether a couple of us should stay home with Nicky while Joey and D.J. or I went with Alex. This was compounded by the fact Alex wasn't comfortable without his brother there, even if Nicky had just gone in to sleep with his parents because he was sick or something, as Michelle reminded us. She really cared about them, and knew how to help them feel better. I was impressed.

"Okay, but Nicky is your responsibility, and you know how much of a handful they can be," I quipped. D.J. agreed, though she instructed me to take Michelle and Nicky into the hospital's cafeteria. We grabbed the rest of a box of cereal for Nicky, knowing at his age he'd get antsy if he didn't eat on schedule. He just pulled it out of the box and ate it as finger food on the way.

When we got there, D.J. and Joey split taking care of Alex and doing paperwork. I snickered as I dialed the phone while watching Michelle try to play with Nicky while keeping him from running around with that cereal box still in his hand. It seemed like a little payback for all those years of watching her.

I asked the restaurant to get them, and Aunt Becky hurried to the phone. "Alex is okay," I blurted, "but we're in the emergency room." My comment actually made her think Nicky was hurt, as she asked, "But what about Nicky?" I guess if you're in an ER you're not okay. But, once I explained, she knew what I meant; Nicky was fine, Alex was in the ER but it wasn't really serious.

Becky:

Jesse and I rushed out of the restaurant, and got to the hospital about the time they were taking Alex back; Steph and Michelle were eating now, and Joey and D.J. were in the room with the twins. I might have left the younger two girls at home with Nicky, but it's a tough call, and I know plenty of mothers who would figure the kid would be better off with his brother there, too. So, I didn't mind.

I'll admit, I baby the kids at times, but Jesse can get that way, too, if someone's hurt, and we both just felt so badly for Alex. We tried our best to help calm him down,

but that was hard with me being a little emotional myself.

Joey took the girls home, while Jesse and I stayed with the boys. We didn't get home till late that evening. Alex had to wear a bandage for a few days. Thankfully, he was okay otherwise, though, and it was our only ER trip with either of them.

Joey told Jesse the next day about the call he'd planned, saying the president was on the phone. "But, I'd never have pulled a prank like that," he promised, referring to the call saying Alex had gone to the emergency room. We knew he wouldn't.

Michelle overheard. "Of course not. If anyone did that, boy, would D.J. have a cow," she said emphatically. She sensed instinctively that would be so bad, it rose to the level of D.J. disciplining her right away. She really was growing up; not like I had, but she knew someone was making sure she obeyed the rules, and would get really tough on really bad behavior. This is why, despite Danny's laxness, Michelle wasn't far worse.

D.J. – Michelle's improvement, D.J.'s ticket was for speeding:[352]

Michelle's main problem now, aside from some bad attitude and attention getting yet, was that she took advantage of others a little. Each time, I took her aside and talked with her, making sure I didn't have to get involved. At times like when she had Nicky and Alex doing stuff for her, Dad was able to convince her it was wrong just by talking – though Steph getting them to squirt her with the hose helped, too.[353]

Even then, she'd asked nicely. Michelle would promise I didn't have to follow up, and I didn't. If it was bad enough, like with our cousins, I took a night of dessert away, too, but I usually didn't have to. Michelle knew I'd give plenty of chores or take plenty of dessert away if she got out of line enough - especially if she tried to take advantage of Dad's sorrow. Her behavior would be excellent within a few years.

One time she took advantage a little, Steph did, too. I got a speeding ticket. I joked about Kimmy's feet, though anyone would know Kimmy sticking her foot out the window would not only not draw a ticket, it wouldn't be my fault. It was for speeding, that's it. Anyway, I tried to hide it from Dad, but failed. I never got any other tickets, but they say most people get a speeding ticket once in their lives.

Other than that and a few other little things, though, Michelle was getting good at taking responsibility for her actions; like apologizing to Teddy and Denise for trying to get stuff out of them, though they started to bribe her first, as kids that age do at times. I still had to watch. But, I had over a year to decide if I could live on campus.

7-21 Be Your Own Best Friend Apr. 4-8, 1994

Jesse – Apr. 15 – Becky's relations:

Some of Becky's relations didn't get along with me; like her cousin.[354] Leave it to Steph, though, to look outside the box a little, and work on their kids over spring break, the ones who Nicky and Alex beat in that twins competition.

This whole week, D.J. and Becky tried to get us to talk, while Steph and Michelle

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[352] "Support Your Local Parents," a speeding ticket is very plausible for a teenager. The type in the episode is one of those things to take as a pen pal telling a joke. Everything works just the same if her ticket is for speeding, where as noted, the other wouldn't even have been D.J.'s fault.

[353] "Smash Club, The Next Generation," they wouldn't think to do it at their age, but Steph would

[354] "Trouble In Twin Town" – it's not known precisely where they lived, but they likely lived somewhere near Becky's parents, and they'd apparently been at the wedding, in the background.

worked with the girls. They'd been impressed by Michelle just saying "good luck" once; they'd wondered what she meant by it, but that helped remind them that there was a better way to act than the snobby way their parents acted.

Things didn't go so well with me and her rich cousin. He thought he was better than everyone. His kids just cared about things. They tried to get them to be polite, but they weren't, especially the dad. So, it figures the kids wouldn't be.

However, a few talks with Debbie and Darla allowed Steph to show off her skill at helping others. You can't work miracles in a week, but they had some impact, and kept in touch later, since Steph was used to having to write friends who'd moved, and could teach Michelle to do the same. Steph ended up leading the girls to Christ a few years later. We paid other visits, and after a number of years, they were pretty nice. Still, we never could get through to their parents, who were more set in their ways.

Stephanie - Apr. 29 – Gia not smoking, D.J.'s Junior Prom:

Gia had gone a whole month without a smoke, and we were all so proud of her. Everyone took her out to eat that evening. Dad hadn't met her mom yet - in fact, he was still a little skeptical of Gia. That was the way he always was, though.

Tomorrow night was the Junior Prom. D.J. didn't have a date, but she really didn't mind. D.J. felt it would be a letdown after having gone to Steve's senior prom. So, since we had a big dance in our middle school, D.J. offered to assist as a chaperone for our dance. Kimmy would be working, after all. She and Kimmy had worked on various student fundraisers and other things this year, and had spent quite a bit of time on the newspaper and the yearbook staffs. So, she helped in a lot of areas already.

Kimmy - Sat., Apr. 30 – Fired from another job:

I'd gotten a job a couple weeks earlier that would help me pay for college, if I got in one. At least, I hoped it would. I'd done such a good job as a waitress at the Smash Club, a nice restaurant had hired me to actually cook things

After a couple weeks, though, I got fired on this night. I can see how constantly confusing sugar and salt would outrage some people; it was all white stuff, though. And, I could understand how that one patron got upset when their meal was too cold, so I shot the oven as high as it would go for a couple minutes and burned it to a crisp. But, at least their Uncle Jesse took me back as a waitress.

I started to think about my own business – hairdresser was a possibility, but party planning seemed interesting, too.[355]

7-22 A Date with Fate May 6-7, 1994

Stephanie – May 9 – Knowing the Future Not Good:

Something bothered me about Michelle's "future ball," as I jokingly call it.

I would never, ever, have wanted to know that Mom was going to die. Yes, it was very painful, but the anxiety as it approached would have been worse.

We didn't always think about it on the anniversary, but as Michelle played, I sat down and talked with her about how sometimes, knowing the future is really bad.

Plus, what she was doing looked cute, but fortune telling and such was playing

[355] As with the others' interests, they'll be different in NetU due to small changes, but would start here.

with the devil, and that was bad. God wants us to have faith, and we're not supposed to know the future. I'd been in church enough to know that was wrong.

Michelle agreed. She threw the ball out that day; she'd gotten it at a carnival. It wasn't working much, anyway. She never dabbled in that again.

Gia was more likely to get involved in that, if not careful. Gia went crazy over a fortune teller at a carnival for a time, but she stopped very quickly. She realized the person was just ripping her off, knowing things based on deductive reasoning, like Sherlock Holmes – for instance, seeing the outfit she was wearing at the same store she'd bought it at - and making a lucky guess or two.[356]

7-23 Too Little Richard Too Late May 13, 1994

Jesse – Punishing for Tearing the Tickets the Next Day:

We'd gotten into the concert anyway, thanks to Michelle's friend Denise. Still, people thought we let the boys off the hook for cutting up those concert tickets. I ignored it because I'd learned to program myself not to scream my head off if I was upset. I'd learned to accept some things just weren't mean to be.

We'd been punishing with timeouts for around nine months, and we were pretty consistent. It was possible to correct them the next day. Kids at two-and-a-half have memories, they're just fuzzy since their concept of time is confused. Even fantasy versus reality is shaky. It's easy for them to think if they imagined or thought of something, it was real. Becky had to talk with them to remind them.

She asked if they'd taken something out of my jacket pocket. She said there were papers in there, described them, and asked if they cut them up. They looked ashamed because of the look on Becky's face. They could tell she wasn't happy. They nodded and admitted it. We'd taught from early on the concept of shame. It sounds bad but it's not. It means learning through correction and rebonding some things are wrong. They learn it's possible to do something wrong, yet they're still loved even if they do. Later, around when we started, it's possible for isolation in timeout to work effectively. Because we'd been consistent since, they knew what it meant to do something bad.

She scolded them as much as a two-year-old should be, and made them sit for timeout. She wanted me to do it, but I was a bit unwilling yet.

We'd had home visits by a social worker from an adoption agency. Thinking about how we might end up adopting overwhelmed us a little. However, I was a lot better than I had been when it came to disciplining, and I normally did it.

Becky – One Other Time the Twins Took Something:

One time he was willing was next year, in lat March. They took some money out of Jesse's wallet and put it in Steph's bag when she was looking for sponsorship money for something at school.[357] Steph discovered it the next day, and told him right away.

He took them upstairs and sat them in the corner after a long talk about not taking things out of there. They remembered that talk – they had a while to think about it, as punishment wasn't just a minute per age, we used five minutes at that point, if it wasn't just to settle. They really learned their lesson from the punishment, but more importantly,

[356] Book, "Crazy About the Future," even Steph says it's not like Allie. No room in the Book Universe. More importantly, this book has the look and feel of Gia, and the TV Universe.

[357] Book, "P.S.: Friends Forever," which is TV Universe and mentions a late March date

the talk. They never took anything like that again.

Jesse never would have had to worry for so long about becoming his own dad. He was always a sweet, loving husband and father. It's just that now, it was easier because it wasn't D.J. – or even me – having to enforce what he said in his talks with them. Which is good, because being boys, and with two of them, they were a bit wilder, though by age four they'd settled down pretty much.

7-24 A House Divided Night of May 20, 1994

Michelle – Sat., May 21 – A Weird Dream:[358]

Steph baby-sat Nicky, Alex, and I last night, and I had the weirdest dream.

First, we have four bathrooms - the second floor one, Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky's full one in the attic, a toilet on the first level, and one where Joey had lived. But, in my dream, we could have only had one, since several people were in line. Otherwise, D.J. could have used a different one.

Joey was hogging the tub to get quiet time. However, he had a quiet space - in the recording studio. He wouldn't be interrupted there because it's soundproof. All he had to do was turn the light on and he'd have had more peace than he could have in the bathtub. Plus, in real life a pizza man would have just left the pizza downstairs for Joey.

We always had plenty of places for people to do their hair and such, though only the second floor one and the attic one had showers. That didn't always seem like a lot of showers, but that was only because of all our people.

D.J. – More reasons why it was a dream:

Michelle told me about her crazy dream this morning. Uncle Jesse referred to a time when Dad painted the banister and he slid down it. Well, the banister could break under his weight. Uncle Jesse never slid down our banister because Dad was afraid we'd try it, so he wasn't allowed. Dad was crazy about safety, after all.

I checked the date, and Dad had indeed painted the banister then, though. Steph and Michelle had been watching home videos with the boys and that was mentioned. However, it was a Saturday, meaning he almost certainly would not have been meeting with an advertising client on that day, anyway.

Danny:

Michelle worried like some kids this age can about family breaking apart, which caused her weird dream. Jesse and Becky were very close to adopting Kathy's baby. It wouldn't have been near as rough on Michelle now, with Jesse having his own family.

Michelle never got jealous of the twins. While she and he were really close it wasn't as tight a bond as when she was four. It would be easier for her to handle.

Of course, Kathy kept him. She informed us she would a week later. But, if they'd

[358] "A House Divided" is a dream. "Nerd for a Day" - Michelle flushed every toilet, implying more than two, as two would be "both," a season before the upstairs with the bathroom Jesse and Becky use would be done. (An earlier note also mentionsmore than one bathroom) So, even if the one wasn't kept when they remade Joey's room, there were still three, plenty for D.J. to use one before her "date."

Danny also had a mirror next to his room she could use. So, between that, the pizza man, Joey not using the studio, Danny a bit out of character without a reasonable explanation, and the banister, too many things are strange compared to other episodes, where one or two might look odd. So, this episode was a dream, we just don't see her awaken.

adopted Scott, they would have moved out, as they'd have needed more room. They had the money to move out no matter what, though. Nothing ever kept them from it, as the Smash Club was doing well enough now, and they could easily get a home loan.

I could never get that wild over money, either. My daughters' accomplishments, yes, cleaning, yes, but never money. I loved this house, and always thought of Pam - I hoped one of the girls could own it someday.

She didn't consider it a nightmare, though, just a story with a problem that she solved in a unique yet freaky way at the end. So, it was just a funny dream to her.

D.J. – Possible college living arrangements:

My possibly moving into a dorm in another year may have played a part, too; by this time, I was confident I could live on campus.

I told Michelle if I moved into a dorm, it wouldn't be just because she was good. It would be because I had every confidence she would feel secure and have a great time without me there. If Dad had married Vicki, it would have been a no-brainer. But, that would have required Vicki to put family first, and she didn't.

It wouldn't be like I was giving up college. I'd just be living like Mom and Dad lived when Dad was in college, if I stayed home. There's no rule that says you have to move out. Thankfully, I was mature enough by this time to know that.

There was a boy who'd had a crush on me named Arthur. I was a tad disappointed that he'd be going to Washington, D.C. for a couple months to see his grandparents. It felt like things wouldn't work. I gave myself till next June first to decide for sure.

Becky – D.J.'s new boyfriend; Rippers out, Jesse thinking about another band:

At the beach about a month ago, D.J. met great boy named Nelson, from a private school. Despite Nelson's wealth, he was very down to earth. His third grade teacher had a profound influence in educating him and other rich kids at that school about the importance of seeing others as equals and treating them with respect. That teacher's work came into play next year, too. One of her former pupils, a girl named Elizabeth, and Michelle became friends, despite Elizabeth's mother's snobby attitude.[359]

Jesse's band let him go without consulting him. I honestly think that if he'd been given some time, he'd have left music on his own terms soon; he was way too busy for them. He was always the kind to balk if made to do something, though. Still, even at that, it took him a while to get around to finding a band, though he started to think about it a couple weeks later. Our family vacation plans caused things to stall a little after that, then he just gradually got a few more people together over the next couple months.

8- 1 Comet's Excellent Adventure	June 30, 1994
8- 4 I've Got a Secret[360]	Jul. 18-9, 1994

[359] "Michelle Rides Again 1," Elizabeth's family seems rich, yet she's down to earth like him

[360] Intended for late September, the baseball strike erased games after August 11. The clubs mentioned as playing in this episode played on the date given, and no mention of school is made. With no strike, "Full House" fans feel, in order, the Yankees, Reds, White Sox, Indians, Expos, or Dodgers won the series. Also, Gwynn hits .383, and Williams hits 58 home runs. Frank Thomas leads in home runs and – because he walks a lot – batting, and may win the Triple Crown.

Still, saying the strike happened is best. Unless the '93 Series got cancelled instead, a '94 Series means home field advantage flips for the 1995-2002 Series. With so much change, it's easiest to say the strike happened. Also, the absence of Teddy and Denise in this episode makes summer quite likely; both

Danny - July 18:

Early last month, Michelle had been at an overnight camp with Stephanie. Soon, we planned a two week vacation to Boston. I loved history, and D.J. wanted to look at Harvard. Obviously, she wanted to stay in California, but she wanted to see the school, based on its name recognition.

D.J. was in the same place with dates as I was; she had gone with Nelson for a month before breaking up with him. Now, Kimmy was dating Nelson. They went to a baseball game between the Dodgers and Giants a couple nights ago. Maybe what Kimmy needed was someone so rich he wouldn't mind that she was lazy.

Being rich wouldn't keep Kimmy from being annoying, though. She'd just do it in a more extravagant way; as if the way she would do it on our trip wasn't enough.

Kimmy - Aug. 8:

We went to Plymouth Plantation today, where all the people party like it's 1629. They told us that the people couldn't say anything about modern stuff, but I had a go at them, anyway. I asked all sorts of strange questions. I knew they were playing real historical figures, and it was interesting to imagine what one of them would say about my collection of wrestlemania figures, or Jesse's love of Elvis.

I must have driven them pretty crazy - D.J. told me later I was this close to being put in the stockade. Of course, that was nothing compared to the embarrassment caused when I went with them to see Harvard.

D.J. – Kimmy At Harvard:

Oh boy. Where do I begin? Well, when we got there, we saw that some students like to spend their spare time playing chess in the center of the campus. Kimmy saw all these chess boards set up, and the people doing that, and she spouted, "I don't believe it, Deej. We've entered a world where everyone is a geek!"

We went into the admissions office, which was opened for prospective students. I introduced myself, and said I was probably staying in California, and loved Stanford, but I was interested in taking a look around, since we were in Boston on vacation. The person could tell Kimmy was about my age, and asked where she considered matriculating.

She responded by saying, "Is that what you do to numbers in algebra when you turn them into letters? I never could understand that stuff." She knew it was a big word, and, to her credit, took a guess.

"Uh...no, actually, it means to attend and study someplace," she was told, the fellow appreciating her attempt.

"Oh. In that case, wherever D.J. goes. Provided I get in," Kimmy added. "Can I ask a question?" She was told she could. "Do you have any normal people here? I mean, like guys who would pay attention to me, and not their chess boards?"

She was told that that was simply one of the great traditions of Harvard, and that there were certainly many opportunities for socializing, too.

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families could be on vacation. Teddy is her best friend, and appears other times. They knew about the strike by the taping, they may have replaced the character of Teddy with Derek to make it more like summer.

Even if Nelson didn't in character mean "end of spring" party in "Comet's Excellent Adventure," they were on again, off again enough there could be a meeting and breakup before this episode, then they get back together and break up again in that episode, making this episode earlier in season eight.

Then, Kimmy put her foot further into her mouth. “Cool. Say, Deej, if you went here, I could just hang out, and maybe some rich guy will marry me.” She thought a moment. “Of course, it would be nice to find one I could understand.”

“Michelle doesn’t know what she’s missing,” Stephanie said with a laugh. Joey had taken Michelle to the childrens’ museum while Steph came with us. She enjoyed it, because of the reputation, but the idea of exploring a college campus wouldn’t appeal as much till I went. Today, it was just to be doing something fun with me.

We looked around, after I got a brochure. Dad said how beautiful the buildings looked covered with ivy. “It must take a lot of work to keep it all looking this neat,” he said, which a lot of people less neat than Dad probably think, too.

The ivy covered brick really was very impressive. However, it drew another comment from Kimmy. She asked someone, “Are you trying to hide the buildings or something? If so, you need to do a better job. Anyone can tell that’s not a bush.”

Even Dad was stunned. “Kimmy, that’s the look around here. That’s why it’s called the Ivy League; lots of buildings are like that.” Steph said she’d hate to think of how Kimmy would decorate one, with her very loud outfit.

“Really? You should retire and be a groundskeeper here,” Kimmy told Dad.

That was the extent of the embarrassing stuff. We had fun overall. I could attend in California for much less, and Stanford and a few other California schools appealed to me, whereas this didn’t quite as much. Still, I loved saying I’d visited Harvard.

Jesse – Even he doesn’t know why Kimmy’s always there:

Denise’s family was on vacation with relatives all of July, when Michelle’s new friend Lisa moved into town. Michelle never asked to go with her. Even Gia was happy at home. I didn’t know why Kimmy came. I guess her parents still paid to get her away. Well, at least she provided some comic relief.

Steph helped Michelle write more to Debbie and Darla, since she was more their age. But, Steph was getting to the age where she would sometimes rather be with friends. And yet, with Gia, it was more that she knew Gia had big problems, and wanted to help. Like Kimmy with D.J., Gia could still pull Steph the wrong way yet if she wasn’t careful. But, Stephanie really wanted to help her, too. And, they shared some interests, though Steph was only slowly getting Gia interested in things besides boys.

Stephanie - Aug. 18 – On Gia being held back, some about Mickey:

When we got back, Gia was still not smoking. She’d slipped back some in her attitude, but I thought Gia had gone far enough for the time being. I was starting to listen to her and get swayed a little. We were just like D.J. and Kimmy, except we did as many wild things in one year as they did in ten.

Mickey was ahead of us, and going with a boy she‘d met at the Smash Club. With a steady boyfriend and all the activities we’d encouraged her to be in - which gave her more great mentors, too - we knew we wouldn‘t see much of her.

Gia got held back, though; the most powerful vacuum couldn’t have picked those grades up enough. Also, we hadn‘t really started on boosting that part of her confidence till spring, anyway. She sometimes said we were the same age, because now that she was trying harder, she was embarrassed about having been left back twice.

It eventually helped for her to know about Uncle Jesse and how he’d erased those

bad feelings he'd had about not graduating. However, that would take a while.

8- 2 Breaking Away Aug. 30-31, 1994

D.J. – Michelle Understands Why to Obey Well, and Her Club:

Steph asked why we always followed Dad's rules. Michelle calmly explained. That was a big step, seeing Michelle do that. It was starting to seem natural for her to follow the rules, though she'd always see me as the ultimate boss. She'd wanted to move away from Steph's mess. I didn't want to force her out like I might have Steph, though. I didn't want to give Michelle the wrong idea – I knew that to Michelle, my enforcing rules was for times when Dad did nothing, or she was doing something really bad. I wanted her to feel free to come to me for anything.

So, that's why I would never kick her out myself, I called Dad.

One other good example of her improvement; though it was a secret, she asked Danny for something nicely instead of acting sneaky.[361] Danny wanted to reward that. She was much better; things had improved, and she wanted to please him more.

Jesse – Early Preschool, Trying Not to Push:

I was determined not to get lax with my boys' education, after I'd influenced Michelle the wrong way early. So, I got too anxious about Nicky and Alex going to preschool. It was half a year before Michelle had, but it was loosely structured. It was really a playgroup. I thought I could teach them myself, then, though they went back and did better than they would have with me. I would have structured it too much for their ages. I didn't go with the natural flow of things with kids as well yet.

8- 3 Making out is Hard to Do Sat., Sept. 10, 1994

Becky - Sept. 16 – Helping Steph understand the need to follow rules:

Steph and D.J. had a few talks about how Stephanie needed to take the lead again with Gia. The party was the worst Gia had gotten Steph into. Danny handled it well, but we hoped it stopped here. Since they weren't seeing each other for a while, except for school - Gia got grounded for longer than Steph since she hosted the party - it was a chance to help Stephanie be a better big sister. D.J. also noticed little things that seemed too much like her, and wanted to help.

One of the biggest chances for Steph to be a great sister was coming up October first. Michelle wasn't quite eight, but since she was in third grade, she had the option of going to her mother-daughter Honeybees slumber party this year, not when she turned eight, though Steph and I both went at age eight. I urged Steph to take her.

Stephanie:

I was torn. On the one hand, it would be the first weekend I was ungrounded for the whole weekend, although Gia was still grounded for a while longer. Not only that, but Aunt Becky had missed the chance to take me because her car broke down. Would she want a chance to redeem herself? Would Michelle want D.J. instead, anyway? After all, D.J. wasn't just a disciplinarian. Michelle had a bit of a mother-daughter bond with her,

[361] "I've Got A Secret" – she'd recall Danny's laxness still, yet she asks kindly even when her friends say not to, something that couldn't happen unless she respected and obeyed well, which he never enforced.

though not nearly as much as she could have. It was sort of like Mickey's and her mom's, though Michelle would never try to smoke or anything.

We left the choice up to Michelle, since it was her party.

Danny - Sat., Oct. 1 – Honeybee History, Similarity with Brownies:

Becky was happy to go. Steph was right, she felt like she'd let her down earlier. Still, she hoped Steph would come too, It would remind her of the fun of helping others, and thus encourage her with Gia. One girl had a sister bring her, and another had her grandmother, though she was rather young, born around 1940.

That dated to before the Honeybees were formed. In the early 1950s, there was a dispute about how rapidly to integrate the Brownies. The Brownies were fast, compared to other groups, but a chapter in San Francisco wanted to go even faster. They broke off, and other chapters followed. Becky's hive in Nebraska was one of a few in the Plains states. The Honeybees were still quite small compared to the Brownies, who quickly integrated. Even now, they had almost all the same badges and activities. However, there were some egos involved, too, and the people who ran the Honeybees decided to continue to co-exist rather than re-join the Brownies.

Stephanie – Michelle's Honeybee party, Gia on newspaper:

D.J. had been willing to help with our spring formal. I decided I should be willing to help with Michelle's Honeybee party, in return. Michelle asked me when D.J. insisted she wouldn't feel bad if she wasn't chosen. Aunt Becky came, too, mostly to help keep things orderly and get a break from Nicky and Alex.

It was at Denise's house, and we had lots of fun. They could be anywhere from late summer to late fall, depending on what worked best for people.

I only wished Gia could have come. I'd told her how important family was to me, and I wanted her to see how much fun it could be if she gave of herself.

I finally convinced her to join the newspaper staff. So, we were making major progress in that department. I explained how to write a proper story without gossip, like D.J. suggested. However, Gia didn't understand why anyone would want to read one.

Gia finally consented to being a gossip columnist. She also authored a monthly piece on music. I saw quite a bit of potential in Gia there and with S.A.D.D..

Joey – Oct. 12 – Grateful for Ability to Use PA Position:

I'd told D.J. if Michelle needed a timeout, but I never enforced rules myself. I've been in the habit of having fun and not worrying about punishing. I was very thankful for the PA position. I didn't have to sit any kids out in the hall or make them write sentences myself. I didn't let anyone run wild volunteering at preschool, or on field trips. But, I was only a helper, not in charge. So, I did like when Michelle was a toddler, and let someone else handle things if need be, since by just telling a kid to go the principal would see it was one of those things for a lecture, timeout, or sentences.

The PA, Missy, had her write a letter of apology, and walked her back. We talked outside the classroom. Her apology was enough. She was really good the rest of the day, so I never told Danny.[362] We told the class where the confusion was, and if they tried,

[362] Seen by majority of fans as the realistic way it would go. She had the same teacher all day. For reasons stated earlier, the more realistic story doesn't fit if they film it like a TV show.

they could have fun learning stuff, which we did. Michelle wanted "roll on the floor laughing" fun, but she enjoyed school, and we had quite a bit of "that was cool!" fun after lunch. Michelle thought I did a good job later that day, and the next couple. She thought more about how her friends would see it earlier, that's why she was upset.

8- 5 To Joey, With Love	Oct. 10, 1994
8- 6 You Pet It, You Bought It	Oct. 22, 1994

D.J. – Michelle's Hamster:

Steph had bought a hamster with babysitting money; Danny let her because she'd helped Gia so much. He did that on the condition it could be Michelle's hamster, too, as he knew Steph just wasn't as interested in pets.

Part was to encourage compassion for others, like Dr. Landress recommended. Caring for others is vital in life. He wanted to help her erase any trace of Jesse's loner attitude. I helped to trim away most of Michelle's rough edges.[363]

Stephanie – D.J., Steph, Sports as Young Teens:

I still liked reading about sports, but I hadn't even been as interested in baseball in fifth grade. I think I wanted to grow up too fast. D.J. wasn't a bad example, but she didn't do the best at showing how a young teen was supposed to be.

It's ironic, because she always wanted to be the best. She was in her own way, but that was the problem. She'd tried to do her own thing and react to Michelle for so long, at times she poured herself into things while forgetting to have fun. If she'd been proactive, she'd have passed that torch to me, and gone on to even play a sport later in high school.

8- 7 On the Road Again	Oct. 28-9, 1994
8- 8 Claire and Present Danger	Nov. 4, 1994

Danny - Nov. 10 – Inability to correct Gia stopped anything with Claire:

I always said nobody would join the family unless everyone was comfortable. I had misgivings about how Gia might influence my younger daughters. Claire was a nice woman, but even before our second date we felt we should go more slowly. This was especially true after what happened a few weeks later.

I could never correct Gia. Michelle understood that to mean I condoned Gia's behavior. That made sense, in a way. I could have made suggestions without lecturing. Steph had. I could have said things to Gia in a way that would help Michelle understand, but I hadn't. Part of that was my not wanting to interfere with the good job Steph did.

I would have had to correct Gia if Claire and I were a couple. That concerned me a lot; so did the bad influence there could be. It was so confusing to me.

It didn't matter, though. Stephanie had spoken to Michelle and done such a good job it turned out I hardly said anything to her after that date. Michelle just tried to get attention - she hadn't colored her hair, she just cut and colored an old wig.

Dr. Landress was pleased, at Michelle's checkup, that I'd noticed the problem, and said to simply keep encouraging Michelle to talk more.

D.J. – Still a bit worried about Gia:

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[363] "You Pet It, you Bought It" – the need to encourage that and the fact both girls share it are why she's allowed one here, but not in the book "The Great Pet Project," also at the start of third grade

I seriously considered living at home for the first year, even if I went to Standord. Yes, Steph got through to Michelle when she acted like Uncle Jesse instead of talking about her fears. The fact Stephanie realized the problem, so Dad didn't say anything else, showed real maturity. But, even with Dad not going fast with Claire, I still felt I might be needed. This would be especially true if Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky moved. And, what kind of influence would Gia be on Michelle? I really began to worry that if they did become a couple, I'd be needed there, every evening.

Of course, Gia and Steph had some good, clean, innocent fun, too; like getting too loud and wild in music stores, which they did one other time, and then before the joy riding incident. But, there were underlying concerns that it wasn't just like Kimmy and I; Kimmy had a good heart underneath, after all.

Thankfully, an accident jolted Gia enough she stopped being a huge rebel, Dad started going really slow with Claire, and not committing to anything with her, and I realized that Michelle obeyed the rules very well even with Dad's problem a couple weeks later. I'd be very helpful, but it wasn't vital that I live at home.

8- 9 Stephanie's Wild Ride Nov. 25, 1994

Joey – Fri., Nov. 25 - Danny's reaction to Stephanie joyriding, etc.:

The problem D.J. refers to is Steph telling Danny about joyriding. It was like a cartoon where someone's frozen. Then, Danny suddenly started hugging Stephanie and crying thankfully. He was so glad she hadn't been hurt, he couldn't say much. Then, he started rambling about dangers in that and D.J.'s hitchhiking. Steph was ready for him to ground her; D.J. figured Danny wouldn't punish for hitchhiking earlier.

Danny seemed unable to do anything about the joyriding. Once he heard about them almost hitting that truck, he flashed back to Pam, worrying about what would happen if one of his girls got hurt or died. D.J. was ready to punish Stephanie herself if Danny did nothing, though she never did otherwise. She'd give her chores and forbid Stephanie from seeing Gia for a while. Hence, D.J. confronted Stephanie and they were having that argument before they learned about the accident.

Michelle came up for a bath. She listened, noticed Danny's distress, and asked, "Does this mean you'll be in charge of me, D.J., like last time Dad was so sad?"

It was the query of a child who understood there were times her sister had to help. She comprehended that the accident with Pam made Danny depressed at times over a loss, or even the threat of it. She was young; she still needed assurance of what to do, so things wouldn't be out of control. That's why she asked.

Steph jumped to Danny's aid before he could talk, as that query shook him up big time. "No, Dad's okay. I'm sure he'll ground me," Stephanie said sadly, knowing it was the right thing to do; it had been very dangerous to ride with those kids. In fact, she'd have accepted being grounded by D.J. right now, thanks to Gia's accident. It was like with other things where she knew she should be punished. She knew she was in trouble, which was why she'd told about D.J.'s hitchhiking, too.

"Yes…and after you visit Gia in the hospital…you are not to see her again for two months," Danny managed to say. "I will not have her influencing you like that. And, I'll stop seeing her mom, too, except to make sure Gia's getting help."

D.J. agreed. "Just what I would have said. After all, you didn't let me see Kimmy

for a few weeks once."[364] She breathed a silent sigh of relief that she didn't have to act. She'd struggled with how she would convince Stephanie of the problem when their argument began, before Danny told her about the accident.

So, Steph was grounded, and couldn't see Gia for a good while. Danny was bothered, but Michelle didn't take advantage, though she turned to D.J. for things a little over the next day or two, figuring D.J. was watching her.

"Anything else dangerous or destructive you want to tell me?" Danny asked.

"Wellll," D.J. started slowly. "Should we tell him about the hole?"[365]

"You know, Dad, you take change better than you think. Everything in your room has been two inches off for over three years," Stephanie began, piquing his curiosity and also trying to encourage him to feel better.

As they explained, D.J. added, "That's when we had Michelle stall for us." Danny rushed in to have a look. "You can see we did excellent repair work," she finished.

Danny was forced to concur. "Well…it does look good. I'm just amazed…maybe I can deal with change better than I thought. You say two whole inches?" The realization that he hadn't noticed the change made him think.

Back to the joyriding, Gia shaped up a lot; she really learned her lesson. Danny had his first long talk with Gia about dangerous things, too. He and Claire went out early next year, like for Valentine's Day, but never got too far, though Gia was getting better.

Stephanie – Sun. Nov. 27 – Michelle Takes Forgiveness to Heart:

Dad forgave us very easily. Michelle knew about it, but as stated, she didn't know for sure if she understood when she asked Jesus into her heart last Christmas. The more certain change was after she received Him next summer. If she didn't understand before, that means she wasn't at the age of accountability at first.

Sorry, big words, I know. But, I used them to show something. She could explain forgiveness using a lengthy definition like she was memorizing and lerning in Sunday School – she did the next weekend with Nicky and Alex. The teacher taught the concept, then gave the kids a little sentence or two to recall, centering around giving the person another chance; which is what God gives us.[366]

It had a big effect. I'd have expected Nicky and Alex to say they were sorry, too, for messing up my game, but Michelle didn't. She was willing to be the big person.

That showed a lot. Things like that show it might have been last Christmas she really meant her salvation pledge; I struggled with the same thing, like lots of people do. I didn't really understand till after her accident.

I guess I shouldn't have slept in some of those mornings Michelle took the church van. Of course, she liked the candy they gave out more than I did, too. But, it was really rewarding to hear the paraphrased definition come from her mouth, even if she did memorize it to earn candy. Because, she took it to heart.

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[364] "Fraternity Reunion"

[365] "The Hole In The Wall Gang" – though it's mentioned in "Happy Birthday Babies 1" Michelle stood up for them, it's unlikely the girls would refer to that instance then, or that Danny would even wonder what instance they were referring to, as he knows the sisters are close and would do this. Besides, if they did mention what had happened, Danny would know he'd handled change well and would have been shown handling change much more easily in episodes before this

[366] Definition is a bit long for an 8YO, but is perfect as a memorized one, which she can do; it is the kind a Sunday School teacher can use to help children learn to forgive each other.

Ramona:

Mom told me stories of how weird her family was. Influences like her dad's friend and Jimmy's hero Suddsy the Clown – Suddsy was sober for good by this time but came from a family with issues – caused her to let her guard down a bit here. Still, she'd learned how to help others, like I did Jackson with he tried the same thing.[367]

Thankfully, D.J. was there to help Mom and keep it from happening again, just like I did. Well, mine was more like D.J. with my line about Jackson running naked; he didn't really try to, but I did get him home fast before he could think of it. Jackson never did that again, either. I really look up to D.J. in how she handles lots of stuff.

Jesse - Sun., Dec. 4 – Advising D.J. on college and living space, plus Tanner finances:

Kimmy did something as dumb as Gia's joyriding. D.J. told me today she had too many things to handle to move into a dorm if it had to be now.

I told D.J. she was smart, but not just for wanting to help. She didn't have to do that, though it was the right thing to do.

D.J. had to think about costs. She could never afford her own place. Even living on campus would increase the amount she spent on school. Danny and we didn't have house payments, and we had a lot saved. However, we gave a lot to charity – D.J. would be in a debutante ball this winter, sponsored by a childrens' hospital and held for families of contributors.[368] The other girls would have such a coming out party, too, when they were eighteen. Also, Danny wanted to make sure his girls learned the value of a dollar. He couldn't pay everything. With any extras, they had to help.

Part of it was Joey's experience, too. Even living on campus and working, Joey couldn't make it through school in only four years.

If D.J. didn't want to be saddled with debt because of some huge rent, she'd have to work more. That meant no free time at all between work and school, and it meant her time to study would be too limited. When Steve and she were still going together, she saw firsthand it was impossible for him. Danny and Pam had needed Pam's babysitting money, and that was with Danny working some.

Of course, living in a dorm wasn't as expensive, but it wasn't dirt cheap, either. Living at home would let her save more money, as the cost of living in our metropolitan area was among the highest in the country.

Most colleges then forced you to have a roommate in a dorm, too – at least your first year or two. Kimmy wasn't getting into college. So, D.J. would spend money she didn't have to if she moved into a college close by, and she might discover she didn't even get along with her roommate.

Too many kids try to get everything at once. The band and I struggled, I worked at garages and things to make ends meet, and it took me years to get a record deal. That's what I emphasized to D.J.. I told her to have fun on campus like her dad and Joey had,

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[367] Series "Fuller House" says Suddsy is Jimmy's hero and their dad's sponsor. It's not known if he's an AA sponsor, but this is a logical place to mention a connection. One season 4 "Fuller House" episode has Jackson doing this and Ramona getting him home from a football team party.

[368] "Fastest Turtle in the West" and other books only mention the charity, but such a ball is very likely and something Danny, doting father that he is, would want to have his girls in if he could.

spend time at the library and student commons and stuff, but, why not live at home?

Joey – D.J.'s eyes on Stanford:

Before she found out she was rejected by Stanford, D.J. didn't heed Jesse's advice. That could be over an hour's drive away, depending on traffic. She could only be home weekends, unless she felt she had to live at home, which she could have.

Things had improved by Christmas to where she knew she could live at Stanford by fall. Kimmy had clearly learned her lesson, and Michelle was improving a lot.

Some might say Michelle had a tiny know-it-all attitude at times, but that was just Jesse rubbing off, and it disappeared as we helped her not go too fast after her accident. The good parts of him stayed, though, like helping others.

D.J.: Worries About Roommates, Steph and Michelle's Relationship:

I still kept Uncle Jesse's advice in the back of my mind. It made sense. I wasn't sure what to do, but if I came home on weekends, or even holidays, Dad was going to keep my bedroom for me, though Steph could sleep there when I wasn't there. So, it wouldn't even help Steph and Michelle get their own rooms full time if I lived on campus. Michelle loved being with Stephanie, anyway. She didn't mind sharing very much, and Steph was getting to be mostly good about it.

The roommate aspect caused some major discomfort for me, especially having had my own room for over three years! Uncle Jesse was right, what if I got someone I couldn't stand as a roommate? They try to pair you up, but it doesn't always work. And, I was so used to privacy now. Steph wasn't snooping much, though she did when Michelle wanted to get in my diary, so she could keep the secret from Michelle about how gentle I'd be. However, by now, Michelle glossed over anything about my punishing her or almost having to spank, as she didn't want to read about that anyway. She wanted to think about being good. And, I hadn't written much about my thoughts after that first time, anyway. After that, it was always just the facts.

In fact, Michelle was into Steph's diary a bit. I let those two settle that. I was tempted to help Michelle once, though I didn't, just to playfully get back at Steph.

Danny – Joey and roommates:

Joey and I had been lucky. We were best friends, we both had good enough grades to get into San Francisco State, though mine were better, and we got to be roommates for almost a year. Joey's next couple years, he got another fellow who he didn't mind but who didn't do much with him, either. I told D.J. sometimes roommates just go their separate ways on campus. She had a lot to consider.

8-11 Arrest Ye Merry Gentlemen Dec. 25, 1994

Jesse – Dec. 25:

I'd seen the owner of a store a few times at the soup kitchen where I'd helped, but didn't know why. Well, he put so much into keeping his store open, he had no money for food at times. He didn't want to sell - he had no friends or family if he retired. We knew he was safe from the other workers telling us, so we had him over for Christmas this year.

The guy never loaded his gun; he didn't even have bullets. He said there's no way he'd have pulled a loaded one with a kid in there. Michelle didn't have nightmares; she

wasn't that scared. Plus, he told us as we were going to our house it wasn't loaded. She did ask Danny to scold him for playing a "mean trick." I just told her he wouldn't have dessert for a couple weeks, joking but probably true, in his case. We convinced him to sell and retire, which he did, moving to a nice community out of state.

8-12 D.J.'s Choice	Jan. 6-14, 1995
8-13 The Producer	Jan. 16-23, 1995

Stephanie – Sat., Jan. 28 – Back With Gia, Best Friends:

It was almost strange being able to hang out with Gia again after being grounded from seeing each other for two months. Of course, Dad and her mom tried to help her improve. And, I'd seen her at school. But, we'd had no time to talk. She brought a present over today, and I realized it was for my birthday and Christmas.

"You know," I said as we ate lunch later, "I still think you should come with us sometime to our youth group on Sundays; you'd have a great time. Of course, usually just Michelle goes, but if you went I'd wake up for it."

"You're always after me, aren't you, Tanner? Always trying something to help me have a better attitude." I could tell she wasn't going to listen yet, but she would. "At least I finally don't think I'm a big nothing anymore."

"I'm glad you're trying to get your life on track, Gia. I have all these big dreams. I want you to dream big, too." Such talk was what caused problems with our band, as we tried too hard to be stars fast, but it was important to keep her thinking positively.

"Yeah, I could be in a hospital somewhere. So, did you like your present?"

"Yeah, thanks." It was some beauty supplies. "We better start doing constructive stuff, or we're going to be the only best friends in history who are grounded from each other more than they hang out," I joked.

She was stunned. "Best friends? You mean that? I mean, not just because that Allie you told me about is far away, or anything?"

I thought for a moment. "Well…yeah. It just sort of came out, but, yeah. I mean, toned down, you're real cool. And, I accept you when you're not. It's like what I've said about forgiveness. I've just been doing some thinking…" I tried to keep from hurting Gia's feelings. I didn't want someone who would get me in trouble. But, I'd started to see her as more than a project; just as D.J. had Kimmy after a few years.

"Don't worry; I've been thinking, too. I've had a bad attitude, huh?"

"Well, it hasn't been that bad…" I hedged.

"Say it, Tanner. Michelle said what D.J. might do if she was ever like me."

"Our dad's not that strict, but Michelle's heard stories about when Uncle Jesse was little, and…" We laughed. "Let's just say I'm glad you've improved so much."

Gia smiled gratefully. She had a long way to go yet. Still, she felt like admitting, "Somehow, I am, too. It's a struggle some days to keep from being mad at the world, fighting for myself because I didn't feel like I had anyone who really cared. But, I'm gad to have someone who'll be there for me, if I fail. Even when I know she'll turn me in to save my life, if I'm ever into drinking or drugs or anything."

Thankfully, she'd never do any of that. We'd still have troubles. But, we were off to a great start. I was glad she had me, too. It felt good to help someone like that.

8-14 Super Bowl Fun Day	Jan. 29, 1995

Joey – Jan. 29 – Realistic Super Bowl:

Michelle's class liked me enough to ask me to take the science club on a field trip. That lasted over two Sundays; we'd gone when it opened, just after twelve. Jesse wanted to see Danny and Becky in the pre-game, but all I cared about was the game. Michelle had wanted to see the pre-game, too, but I told her she should be committed to the fun of learning. Besides, her dad would be on for a few minutes at most.

I'd brought a radio with headphones. I listened a bit after the 3:20 local start, and confused lots of things, like saying linebacker Junior Seau was a prehistoric monster. I finally took the kids to our house and we watched it there. I'd promised parents not to have them back before the game was over. Then, we went next week, when it was a little more crowded, but I wasn't distracted, and we had all day, not just an afternoon.[369]

8-15 My Left and Right Foot Feb. 2-3, 1995

D.J. – Her new doctor, Being more playful as a sister now:

I no longer had a pediatrician. Dr. Landress recommended I find a regular doctor. I thought it was a good idea. I'd be going to college, but also in case there were problems with Michelle. Dad said I should just because he was so protective. I got an appointment today with one in Dad's doctor's group. It would be soon after my birthday party, which was a bit later because I was busy with this charity game.

I told the doctor Dad hadn't always done his job disciplining Michelle, and what I'd had to do; that I didn't feel much stress, but I might bring up concerns at times.

I hadn't had to be a mother figure much lately, so Steph and I joked around more, like with her feet, thought Steph did most of the kidding, along with Kimmy, that time. There had been other times when I was more playful, too. So, I wasn't always in that role, though I might be a little. I also mentioned my concerns about how Michelle kept her feelings inside, because of our uncle's influence.

The doctor said that might not be a big concern, but it was something to monitor; same with Michelle trying to grow up too fast. It was normal for younger siblings to want to be like their older ones, as long as she didn't burn too many bridges to fun.

The doctor said to keep encouraging Dad, and urge Michelle to go to him, as I had been. If it got bad, a visit or two with Dr. Steiner might be beneficial, but that probably wouldn't be needed, if we all kept helping her. Even if it was, it wouldn't be long term; it would be like Steph after the earthquake. She said I'd done well with Michelle, though, and to keep the lines of communication open, since she saw me in such a vital role.

8-16 Air Jesse Feb. 7-10, 1995
8-17 Dateless in San Francisco Feb. 13-14, 1995

Danny – Michelle Trying to Grow Up Too Fast:

One problem with having older sisters is that sometimes, a girl wants to be too much like them. Today, Claire and I discussed how well Stephanie and Gia had behaved in the couple weeks they'd been allowed to see each other again. We also discussed how

[369] "Super Bowl Fun Day" – the realistic way. Joey's not into football, he never breaks promises otherwise, and they'd have had some time in the museum, as there's no way he'd care about a long pregame like Jess had. As noted, Michelle may want to see her dad, but she had to learn about commitments and choices, and this was a good place to do so. Most figured he'd have them there a few hours, a good number felt he used a VCR and tried to avoid hearing about it, radio is a logical compromise.

Michelle was handling things, and what my family could do.

She was too anxious to grow up, like D.J. worried she could get. It's like she burned bridges to fun and games at times, like wanting a boyfriend. I didn't overschedule her – that's a major problem with kids. I encouraged more activities after this, though. I got her to the stables more, so she got interested in horse jumping. I pushed soccer – indoor if she wanted - and softball. She'd try harder at soccer this fall.

We helped her interest in art grow, too. I also encouraged drama, when she helped some classmates in next week in a talent night at the Smash Club.

She enjoyed performing, and helping others do it. It took her mind off of trying to do everything her sisters did. With Steph, that had been okay; she had Michelle to play with, too. Michelle just distanced herself from kid stuff way too fast. It was that "all or nothing" attitude of Jesse's coming out in her.

Jesse – Appearances:

Another bit of bad attitude, which she got more from Steph, was that appearance was so vital. Our bands didn't care about that as teens – rock and rolling guys invented the "I don't care about my appearance" look. If it was up to girls trying to invent rock and roll, it never would have gotten off the ground. Steph's and my disagreement over her band was really a gender one, though I didn't think of that at the time.

She never went back to music; she got other interests, and Michelle's accident made her rethink her priorities. It was one of those things where girls at that age go so fast they sometimes try something for a couple weeks and then forget about it.

Michelle wasn't sure what she wanted to look like. It was a sign of the times; that "awkward age" keeps going down. Danny had always been pretty strict on clothing, so we tried to keep her away from clothes that showed a lot of skin. Now that she was making her own choices, Becky took her out shopping a lot, because she was a good, conservative dresser, and Michelle trusted her.

With Michelle, it was her earlier behavior that I'd influenced through my attitude. I guess with Steph, it was her musical choices and such; she liked some harder stuff than she would have otherwise. It was even getting away from what I considered real rock music. Thankfully, she never went too far, and she found a boyfriend who would help her get away from the worst stuff, though it would take till her later teens for her tastes to be what they would have been had D.J. been proactive.

Joey – On solving the problems with Mrs. Caruthers:

I would never sue anyone, with how non-confrontational I am. Mrs. Caruthers was lucky; around the time she first saw me, she also had her sights on another guy, who would have reported her. If Michelle doesn't claim her bike is stolen – as she wouldn't have with D.J. as the mother figure – or even if she's in another class, so she isn't over at Derek's - Mrs. Caruthers never would have seen me. She have been taken off her role in the PTA when this other guy did pursue the matter.[370]

Anyway, Michelle's teacher helped put a stop to Mrs. Caruthers chasing me. Before she reported it, another incident helped people see what was happening. Mrs. Caruthers' daughter was in fifth grade, and chasing some boys really aggressively. She needed lots of help controlling her passion. She was dressed like Jessica Rabbit when this

[370] As happens in books, where as you can see, this wouldn't happen to Joey.

happened. The PA had a long talk with her. Not only was she punished, she was referred to the school psychologist; it had happened a few other times.

The school worked with both to make sure they got plenty of help. Thankfully, both stopped acting so wild around guys. Her girl never turned into a Kathy Santoni like she might have, and I never heard from Mrs. Caruthers again, either.

8-18 We Got the Beat Feb. 16-24, 1995

Becky – Where Nicky and Alex Were:

The boys learned quickly to behave, save for a few little tantrums; they inherited our stubborn streaks. Even with that, as they calmed down pretty fast with us timing out ignoring, and rarely threw them. Having the girls to help was great.

The only time they did anything really bad was around Valentine's Day.[371] Nicky and Alex played with matches they'd gotten from a friend at preschool. Jesse lectured after he picked them up, and they were in our 1300 square foot apartment all day. One of us always watched. Gia watched a bit, too.

Jesse took them to the fire station, too, which had a big impact.

Michelle didn't tell them exactly what D.J. threatened, we were nowhere near that, and never would be. She did say D.J. had to get really tough and how sad they'd been when she was really naughty. Michelle got through to them.

8-19 Taking the Plunge Tues., Feb. 28, 1995

D.J. - Mar. 1 – Senior year decisions – Prom, etc.:

I was getting anxious about the prom May 6th. I still had no possible date. None of my old boyfriends interested me. Ricky, the paper boy, had been going steady for a couple years with someone, so the best of my Junior High boyfriends was out. Viper was too into music, and I was too turned off from how he and Nelson had fought over me to go with one of them. Nelson was a friend, but I wanted a date for my prom.

I thought about the handicapped kids in our high school. The only blind kid was a boy named Greg. He'd gotten the nerve to ask a few girls lately. By the time I learned about him, though, another girl had said "yes." I would have asked him myself, given a few more weeks. He had fished around, not having a clue how to go about it, yet his mom had urged him to go. I was so happy for him. A kid with cerebral palsy had a date, and a couple other boys with challenges weren't interested in going.

If I'd gone with one of them, I was willing to compromise. Even that could have been better than just going with a friend. If, for instance, Greg and I got together, we'd have had two months to know each other. Romance could have formed. Even if it didn't, I'd have been helping someone, and it would have made us both feel great.

Until her pregnancy, Kathy would have said I was too mature, but that was just her way of saying she felt pressured to be more mature because of how I was. She knew to make mature decisions now, but sadly, her carefree days were gone.

There was time to think about guys, however. I needed to decide on a college. I'd

[371] They're only in the teaser in "We Got the Beat" and the one after. Even if there's scenes in the original of the one before with them, they're seen very little. If they were sick Jesse and Becky would be caring for them. Since there's plenty of place to play in the whole apartment, it could be punishment in "Dateless in San Francisco," and someone not in a scene can easily be watching them; even Gia, as will be shown later. With action and family in different places after that episode, they can be watched easier there.

been rejected by Stanford, and accepted by Berkeley - University of California schools usually sent acceptances out early. This week, I heard that I'd been accepted by San Francisco State, Califnoria Unviersity - both in the Bay Area where I could live at home - and some further, like U.S.C..

At first I thought I'd like Berkeley, a part of the U. of California system. The campus wasn't my style, though. I was mostly moderate, but a bit conservative. It seemed too liberal for me. California U. was a different school, not in that system. Dad and Joey's school provided a great variety of Journalism courses, including radio and TV. They also had a fine nursing program, which drew my interest. I knew little about the U. of California at San Francisco compared to the others, except that it was a graduate school and focused solely on medicine and research.

I had no idea how much I'd get to know it soon.

Becky – Teaching cooking, other skills:

D.J. had a lot more choices than my grandma, who raised her family during the Dust Bowl. A few siblings moved out to California, and Aunt Ida had joined them after she retired, though she was the only one left, and wouldn't last many more years.

I hadn't paid much attention to homemaking skills, but I taught Michelle to cook, which I was proud of. She'd learned some about cooking in the Honeybees, but not how to cook a big meal. Uncle Jesse had taught Steph, though his skill was mostly baking. It's funny how he was better at cooking than me, though I was good. It's just that in a rush, it was easy to make mistakes, like with my sausage and lima bean casserole.

I think if D.J.'s more proactive, she teaches both these skills; she did teach Steph how to sew, though I worked with Michelle on that.

One thing I reminded Kimmy was that she was pretty lazy to be a homemaker, if she did get married. Running a household is a full-time job, and Kimmy still wasn't big into cleaning her own feet, let alone a house. She would decide to improve some in later years when she finally did marry, but part of her just always liked lounging around, even after she found an occupation so she could make some decent money.

8-20 Up on the Roof	Tues., Mar. 7, 1995
8-21 Leap of Faith	Wed., Mar. 8-Fri., Mar. 10, 1995

Joey – Michelle Never Tried To Go To Concert, Talks About Feelings:[372]

I was given two tickets for a concert, being a deejay. The lyrics were kind of bad, and I thought Danny might frown on Steph going. Still, I sometimes tried too hard to be a friend. Plus, I'd entertain Steph if D.J. had a party, like at a Daffy Duck Film Festival. I could find something Michelle would love; I wasn't so sure about her and Steph. So, when I gave the older girls the tickets, I promised to do whatever Michelle wanted. After urging her to talk, the girls promised to spend next weekend with her. They did.

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[372] Most feel this is the way it happened. Joey would offer something fun right away, like what he took Steph to in "13 Candles." This family would get a child to talk normally, not play tricks. Your pen pal only wanted to tell jokes, like a few other episodes with 1-2 unrealistic things. A few said it happened and D.J. was going to tell Michelle to get out of bed before they left, which she'd have had to because staying there with all those clothes might have been dangerous, and she'd know it. Still, even if that's the case, it's more realistic to say it was like here, as it wouldn't come to that. A minority felt D.J. and Kimmy went to it, saying Danny wouldn't let Steph go, but Joey would find it easier to please just one girl, not both.

Danny – Mar. 10 – Jesse Acting, Michelle Learns About Real Dating:

Jesse acted like he had a sudden fear of heights to keep Becky from bungee jumping with him, though he eventually gave in.

Meanwhile, Michelle loved comedy, but wanted to be mature like her sisters. Something like when Joey took Steph to that Daffy Duck thing wouldn't have worked.

Instead, they went to a dinner theater and a play; we had plenty to choose from that weren't sold out and she could appreciate, given the Bay Area; even with "Yankee Doodle Dandy" or something, she'd understand it.

He made some calls before finding one. Then, he said, "There's thousands of young people, Michelle, who won't have the fun you and I will. You'll see why."

Joey sold it as a father-daughter night, almost like a "date." It was like he'd done with Steph. They got all dressed up, and Michelle felt really special.

"Now this is what a date should feel like," Joey said as they came home. "Not that I've been on many lately, but it's all about having fun. You had fun, right?"

"Sure. That was great." They reminisced about the best stuff. "So, why do Steph's magazines talk about that other stuff?"

"Well, teenagers get into romance, and they don't have the experience. So, they get advice on that. But, anyone who goes on a date only to do that is crazy. I mean, when you're ninety, you won't care about that, but you're sure gonna care if you like the person. You know how to do that as a kid, but if you're not careful, that other stuff takes over. That's was D.J.'s problem at first, and why she and Steve broke up."

Michelle thought for a moment. "Is that why you said we'd have more fun?"

"You've got it," he said with a smile.

"Those other women sure are missing out on you."

Joey felt ten feet tall hearing Michelle say that. "Thanks. Talking like a cartoon isn't a lot of people's idea of romance. But, you've got to have fun in life, too."

"Yeah. Thanks for taking me, Joey," Michelle repeated. She'd learned a valuable lesson. Not because someone tried to plan things just right, like Jesse could do; and, like I sadly did at times. But, because Joey had just shared some fun with her. She'd have lots of fun as a teen, not getting caught up in some of the magazine stuff like Steph had; indeed, Steph would lose interest in them as she matured and got into high school.

Stephanie – Mar. 19 – Great weekend, Michelle needing "mother figures":

We spent this weekend enjoying Michelle's company. We did lots of fun stuff with her. We always tried to be good sisters, despite some times we got silly because we were happy not to have the pressure of reacting like moms, though she needed us to be just a tad more because of how Dad ignored stuff.

Someone wrote a good book about love languages; it could be argued Michelle felt love most when people helped her. However, she needed to learn to talk about her feelings, and thankfully, Joey did some that time. She wasn't always going to have people able to guess how she was feeing or what she needed.

So, D.J. had a long talk with her the day after the concert. It was funny, and a little thought provoking, because Michelle said she'd had more fun than we did.

I had to admit, I didn't pay much attention to the words or anything at the concert, I only cared that D.J. and I were doing something. D.J. still understood what Michelle meant a little better than I had, since she was older. But, Michelle was right in that having

my insides aroused by music wasn't all there was to life.

D.J. – Concerned About Michelle's Attitude

I was impressed by how Steph seemed to be maturing, though she had problems till after Michelle's accident. I was a bit concerned about Michelle.

As Steph said, Michelle couldn't rely on others to know what she felt all the time. I might not have guessed how she felt, since I wasn't proactive, and not in tune to such things. Had Joey not been around us for almost eight years, he might not have done what he did for her; thankfully, he had done it for Steph and was used to it.

We tried to help her talk, especially to Dad. It was slow going, but there were no more huge problems, as we all watching extra close to make sure she was okay after her accident. That helped us all talk about things a lot better, instead of holding things in, though there will always be little things, even between us as we drew a lot closer.

Jesse – Apr. 3 - On Steph's pen pal:

Steph had gotten a pen pal from Atlanta in 4th grade, in a program designed to help kids learn about other cultures. They found out they were actually pretty different, but started to get along at the end. [373] Steph always enjoyed writing because of the friends who had moved away, and would have kept it up even had Allie stayed.

Danny wondered sometimes if Allie might have had a calming influence that kept Steph from doing a few things with Gia she shouldn't have, but by this time they'd settled down a lot. There were kids who would have been at the other school if a different redistricting plan passed, including a couple boys Steph had crushes on around this time, but nobody she was really close friends with back then.

Becky – Apr. 4 – Michelle Eating Meats Again, Jesse's blood pressure:

Michelle was convinced to become a vegetarian for a while, because of Steph's pen pal. As with some this age, she got a little overzealous. The same thing happened when she tried to win an environmental contest at school. She threw D.J.'s shampoo away and had us all eating out of cans near Christmas break in fourth grade.[374] Still, she was trying to think of others. It was a lot better than she had been.

This phase didn't last long. We had a heart to heart talk about it after school, when she asked me how I stood it living on a farm. I described how growing up on a farm, slaughtering animals was a way of life. We supported her if she truly wanted this, but it just felt like God had made all these animals for that purpose. It wasn't like they were humans with a soul.

Besides, Steph's friend had only become a vegetarian a few months earlier, and as I pointed out, she might change back in a few more months.

We didn't want Michelle doing something just because one person influenced her. After another few days she decided to go back to eating meat.

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[373] Book, "P.S.: Friends Forever" – Fits better in the TV timeline. It fits snugly with episode dates, given the date in the book. Gia easily replaces Allie and Darcy. Steph's personality is more TV Universe. She'd be molded enough by D.J. in books a different pen pal is plausible, & as you'll see she'd have no time for a visit, anyway; other books from spring of 1995 seem to take place at the same time.

[374] "Merry Christmas, World," one your narrator hasn't read, but is clearly TV Universe - she doesn't worry much about how D.J. would react, unlike in books, and trying to make the family go along with stuff is in keeping with TV Michelle. Not to mention another Christmas one that's clearly Book Universe conflicts.

Thankfully, she wasn't holding things in. So she wouldn't have problems later in life like Jesse; he had some high blood pressure. His problem ended when he started to settle down some, but that was mostly because of Michelle's accident. It forced him to take it easy and enjoy life more, without the stress the he put on himself otherwise. He never had a problem with high blood pressure again.

8-22 All Stood Up Apr. 6-7, 1995

Stephanie – Apr. 7 – Bothered By Gia's Advice:

Michelle was getting better at thinking of others, but I was going backwards a little, like with that boy who stood me up. We remained friends, but after what Gia had suggested backfired, I wasn't sure what to think

I knew I would have just ignored him or maybe even talked to him earlier. I didn't care if it made me feel good; I couldn't stand the fact I'd been vengeful. I was secretly bothered by the way her attitude was affecting me.

That's one reason I reacted to Michelle the way I did a few weeks later when she was teasing me. I liked Gia, but hated some of the things I was doing because of her.

The problem was that I didn't want to hear anything from any of the adults. Well, except Joey, he wouldn't act like he knew everything abut my problems.

Joey – Getting Stephanie to Talk to Gia:

I walked up to Stephanie, and asked what was wrong. She didn't want to talk, so I said, "Okay," and shrugged. "I promise I won't badger you like your dad."

Stephanie smiled. "Thanks, Joey."

"I'll find some other way to get you to talk." I began singing "It's Not Easy Being Green" in my Kermit the Frog voice. She chuckled and held up her hands.

"Okay, I'll talk." She thought for a second, and said, "You've got it easy. Nobody cares it you act grown up or not." She told me how she felt about what Gia had convinced her to do to "get back at" that boy who stood her up. "I know Gia gave me bad advice, but I don't know what to say. How do I tell her? What if some boy stands me up again? It's easy for you; if a woman stands you up you just go watch cartoons."

"Well, Steph, we all have choices," I remarked. "We can handle things ourselves, or let an adult do it. You're taught to let adults handle things, till you learn how to do it on your own. I don't stand up to others much." I smirked. "I can hear Jesse, 'Yeah, you let an adult do it even now.'" Stephanie agreed; he'd say that. "But, the point is, I know when it's a good time to intervene with friends. When you can focus on the positive. So, when Gia does something really good next time, you can bring this up, and say, 'You know, this is a lot better than last time,' and say why. Because in your heart, I'm sure you knew what to do, and that Gia's advice wasn't very good."

Stephanie thought a moment. "You're right. I knew what to do. I didn't have to react just because it made me feel good. That's why Gia does it, huh?"

I agreed. "I think that divorce really made her fight and act out on others, because that's how she saw her family acting. Too bad she didn't turn to kid stuff. She'd feel a lot happier, I'm sure," I remarked. "Not everyone does that, though."

Stephanie wasn't sure what to say to that, but she knew she had to keep pointing Gia in the right direction; she couldn't stop just because it might be hard for Gia to hear. Gia needed someone like Stephanie to help her. Steph just didn't know how.

Michelle's accident changed that. Steph was able to tell Gia how she felt, by focusing on the positive. Of course, they had a tough time just getting Michelle to talk about her problems at times right now, though at least it was improving.

D.J. – Apr. 20 – Getting Michelle to talk:

Michelle went to Dad because of our talk about how to approach situations. When Michelle tried to trick me into her chores, I said I'd taught her well for a reason. My doctor suggested that Michelle needed to know she wasn't the one running things. And, by stating that she got sneaky because of my teaching her, it was emphasizing my control over situations, so she didn't think she could just do what she wanted – others were in control of her, even of her sneakiness.

After that, I sat down and talked with her. To her credit, Michelle told me I didn't have to do her chores – she knew she had to do those chores. However, she had also wanted to show, in a way, that she could do what she did. I praised her for how her mind worked; I said I figured it was just one of those times when she wanted to show she could do something better than me. However, I also pointed out that since she was so mature, she should express her feelings more.

I didn't like to blame Dad, but just like when the dinosaur, just when things seem to be getting better, his ignoring of Michelle's concerns really set things back, though not by much this time. I think there might have been a problem or two less in the fall if he'd listened to her. And, I must admit, if I'd known Dad would get so competitive, I would have insisted Michelle come to me for stuff here, not half a year later like I ended up doing. I wanted Michelle to have confidence in him, though.

Michelle – On her later seasons attitude:

I obeyed well; I took pride in that and copied Uncle Jesse, who was still my main role model. Sure, I messed up, because like him I didn't think about consequences well. I wasn't nearly as mature as I would have been with D.J. as a role model.

Still, I was nice, kind, and wanted to help others. A person can still have attitude problems and be saved – look at Uncle Jesse. Was the change in me over a year ago from having God in my heart, or did I want to be really good, and wasn't old enough to understand my decision? Only God knows if I got saved then, or this summer.

I liked helping others; by fourth grade next year, I helped two groups of friends with a project. Of course, it was the same one, but that was the kind of problem I had, as I didn't always plan things well sometimes, like Uncle Jesse.[375]

I still held things inside a lot. I told Dad I was concerned about horse jumping, but he didn't try to understand. I guess he did the same with Steph and dancing, but I never thought of walking my horse around, like when Steph did the wrong dance.

I should have talked to D.J.. I couldn't remember anything after my accident, but it not only brought us closer, it helped me learn to go to others more often, anyway.

Becky - Sat., Apr. 29:

Jesse seemed to be drowning himself in work. He got that way sometimes, and it

[375] "Calling All Planets" – One of those books, like a few others, that are canon for TV because there's no room in the book universe. Unlike most in this category, though, this could be true of Book Michelle, it just doesn't fit in the calendar. Some Stephanie books, though not many, might fall into this category, too.

was hard to understand why. Our whole family was having problems, though. It wasn't just one dumb decision, like Joey scheduling a trip with Michelle's class on Super Bowl Sunday, and then being rude by ending it after a few hours. At least they'd had far more fun stuff the following weekend. Danny just couldn't stop thinking of Michelle as a future Olympian for some reason. And then, Stephanie was just so touchy for no reason at all. Usually, she'd pull out those embarrassing pictures and show them to Andrew. Especially one of Michelle eating the last bit of ice cream out of a gallon tub when she was about five; she looked like she had eaten the whole thing.

8-23 Michelle Rides Again (1) and
8-24 Michelle Rides Again (2) Apr. 14-May 6, 1995

Stephanie – Most scared after seeing Michelle that she could remember:

I didn't know why I hadn't thought of such pictures. I hoped I wasn't becoming like Gia. Whatever it was, I gave myself a stern lecture with a string of "how rude"s as D.J. drove me to the hospital after Michelle's accident. And, that was after I'd apologized to Michelle and told her I loved her. I rode on the back of Elizabeth's horse.

She was scared, but planned to race with Uncle Jesse to the ambulance shed they always have for these events. He could direct the ambulance back while she rode over to tell us. She was good enough to win three straight competitions, after all. As it was, the shed was close enough to the stands, once Uncle Jesse got there she just rode over to tell us while the ambulance went out to the meadow. Dad was trying his cell phone, but had them ride to the shed – an ambulance would be there for any kind of athletic even like this - in case it wasn't in range of a cell tower. He'd known just what to do, as part of his protectiveness was taking Red Cross safety courses each year.

I was the most scared I could remember, seeing her unconscious, with that back board behind her in case she'd hurt her neck.

I just hoped Gia could help. We'd worked for over a year on how she could become a more caring, understanding person. Now, I'd see how I was as a mentor. Maybe she'd see my other problem and help that, too.

Jesse – Michelle groggy in ambulance, Danny too busy to notice:

Steph called Gia, and they talked for quite a bit while we waited. The hospital was a madhouse, it took several hours to find out how Michelle was. If she'd still been out or even groggy it would have been dangerous. However, she'd started to awaken in the ambulance; they just never had the chance to tell us. And, Danny was too busy trying to find something to clean to notice when he rode with them.

Michelle had regained complete consciousness after a bit longer. The doctor said she regained consciousness and that concerned Danny, considered how often he took those Red Cross safety courses. However, there's this coma scale they use to measure such things, and she was at the best points on that scale. That's what she'd just reached.

Stephanie - Sun. Apr. 30:

Dad had been about ready yesterday afternoon to let me try to set a world record for consecutive singing of "You Are My Sunshine" like I wanted. Then, we learned she was okay. We all went up to see her in that really dim room for dinner that night; it had to be dim so her brain could recover.

I had a bad nightmare, though, that evening. I woke up screaming, and D.J. came in to comfort me, like she had when I was little, though I usually went to Dad with nightmares. I'd have gone to her more if she'd been proactive. Uncle Jesse came down to talk to me, too. I was being really hard on myself, and Gia was helping me get that out, but what I really needed to do was to forgive myself. She understood how I was feeling, but Uncle Jesse and D.J. were the ones to really help me see it wasn't as bad as I feared.

Kimmy:

Michelle wasn't in any danger. But, they'd all be helping her. Her head hit a little stone just right, and her helmet padding was a little too far up to help. It never would have been fatal, but it was a typical concussion that can knock someone out.

D.J. said they later learned she was out about seven minutes while they got the ambulance to her and checked her out. She woke up real groffy in the ambulance, which took ten more out of the meadow and to the hospital.

While they worried about Michelle, I had to find a date for D.J. on my own.

Stephanie – Forgiveness:

I told Gia the situation before church. And, to her credit, she said point blank, "Here's where I use all that stuff you've said about supporting others, huh?"

She came with me, D.J, and Aunt Becky. At the end of the service, I went up and cried remorsefully at the altar for a few minutes about how bad a sister I'd been for not forgiving her after such a little fight, and rededicated myself to Him.

`That's where it could be argued I really started to understand what forgiveness meant - it means loving the person anyway. I had said something flippantly, but in reality, I would always love her, and never would have wanted anything bad to happen.

In fact, I prayed at the hospital for God's forgiveness the previous evening. It was very busy, and we hadn't heard anything for a while, so we didn't learn she was okay. I'd ridden out to see her with Elizabeth and said "I forgive you" and "I love you." Then, at the hospital, I told God if He wanted me to I would give up everything to see her all better. I was ready to set a world record for consecutive singing of "You Are My Sunshine." As usual with me, I got all excited when I didn't have to be.

Thankfully, God understood. And, Uncle Jesse helped, too. He said God had to struggle a lot more with him than He did with me.

Still, while I'd prayed real hard yesterday afternoon, today I got assurance that Jesus really forgave me. I didn't know if it was assurance of my salvation like the minister phrased it, but maybe it was. I knew for sure after this that putting my trust in Him to forgive me through what He did on the cross was all that I needed.

The reverend was great at loving others to the Lord, and not sounding too preachy when talking to them in person, like with me or like Uncle Jess. He understood how to help those with needs that weren't what most people had. He knew ours just wasn't the typical two parent situation, and that Dad had trouble being a leader at times, and tried his best to encourage us in the Lord anyway. It's too bad we didn't use the opportunities we were given as much. At least Gia saw how I was, and how I changed after this to be even better, and trusted Christ as her Savior less than a year later.

At that same altar today, I committed myself to doing all I could to help - I even came up with some really funny ideas on things that could be replayed, one might say, to

see if it jogged Michelle's memory.

I took Michelle's pig up to her after we stopped by Teddy's to get it. He'd never given it back, but we learned early memories come before later ones, so we thought it might work. Gia watched and talked a little, but she could tell I needed to take charge.

Becky:

Jesse promised to cut back on his schedule. He'd already begun thinking about hiring someone to run the Smash Club on a daily basis, while he handled the big things. It would mean more expenses for the club, but one extra person wouldn't break the bank. Jesse could work him or her in for a while, so he could afford to hire someone without a huge amount of experience and who was thus less expensive.

He also said the Monkey Puppets were out, too. He admitted he'd made a mistake forming another band after the Rippers - he'd been dropped because he hadn't had any time for the band. He just disliked the fact that with the Rippers, he wasn't able to leave on his own terms. They basically fired him.

Joey couldn't do anything but the radio station, though, since he'd gotten the idea of working with Jesse on TV. So, he was at a bit of a loss on what to do.

Kimmy:

Stephanie told Gia what all they needed, and that I might need help finding D.J. a date. However, then Stephanie told her they ought to find a woman for Joey, too. Gia went around to some of the nurses in the hospital, but got nowhere for a while.

Stephanie - Mon., May 1:

I was a little nervous. They would have released her yesterday or today, [376] but now it wouldn't be till tomorrow at the earliest, because Michelle had headaches. They could happen after a concussion, and they were slowing down. Also, she hadn't thrown up, which would be another warning sign if she did. She also didn't have any problems on the magnetic resonance imaging they did. So, she'd probably be released tomorrow. Still, Gia could tell I was crestfallen.

Gia and I enjoyed talking with Teddy and Denise as they visited and brought all the cards from Michelle's class. But, I needed to talk to the doctor, to be assured that everything was going to be all right. Gia brought the first doctor she found. He was a podiatrist visiting from the Philippines who spoke little English, but at least she tried.

We saw Michelle's regular doctor talking with my dad a few minutes later. He assured us that Michelle would recover fully, and that as long as the headaches were still going down it would be fine.

The talk bored Nicky and Alex. But, as Gia entertained them, I noticed the second of two things that struck me as interesting that day.

D.J. – Gia Starting to Understand:

I'd been spending the bulk of my time talking to nurses and doctors about school. I'd enjoyed volunteering, and I knew there was a real need for nurses in some areas. I'd

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[376] Even with amnesia, with no other problems, a concussion victim would be sent home unless they had other symptoms. Michelle's head would hurt, but your "TV pen pal" had her stay a week to squeeze Steve into the finale. Since it wasn't that bad a fall, it was really a 2-3 day stay.

always enjoyed journalism, which was San Frnciscom state's pull, but the more I got to know of this place, the more I liked it – and medicine.

Right now, though, Stephanie and Gia were drawing my attention.

"It sounds like she gets to come home tomorrow," I said soothingly to Stephanie. "We've been praying, let's just keep doing that. It's worked before. She's very comfortable around you, you know."

Stephanie agreed. "I don't see why, though."

"Tanner, I thought I was the dumb one. It's that first day in Kindergarten you told me about," Gia replied adamantly.

"Yeah, right. Come on, Gia, I haven't been that close to her lately, although I did take her to her Honeybee slumber party. She probably thinks I hate her."

"She's surrounded by strangers, like back then. Duhhuh." Gia got that look and challenged me. "Let's make a bet. I say she remembers you vividly before anyone else."

"Okay," Stephanie said with a grin, enjoying the sparring match. "You're on. I say she remembers Uncle Jesse first. Or D.J., or our Dad."

"Okay, Tanner. You say she's real close to him, so we'll say I say you and you say your uncle. If she remembers anyone else first, the bet's off. What are we wagering? How about $25 of products at the salon in the mall."

I was glad to see Stephanie so excited. "You're on, Gia. I hope I have to buy you that, but I don't see how. I haven't been a very good sister the last few months."

"Steph, you are, and always have been, a much better sister than you give yourself credit for," I told her, giving a little pep talk. Then, I pointed out how well Gia was at entertaining Nicky and Alex. "Gia seems to be a natural at dealing with young children."

"You're right, Deej. She always used to treat Michelle like she was a lot younger, but she did a good job at that, all things considered. It annoyed Michelle, but it wasn't anything like what I'd feel about Kimmy."

"Kimmy bugged me at times, too, Steph. There were times I felt the same way about Kimmy as you do now about Michelle, thinking maybe I wasn't doing as well as I should with her. Like when she got drunk, I wondered, what was I missing?" I pranced around momentarily. "I'd told her about Mom, and the drunk driver that hit her. I'd tried so hard to encourage her not to follow the crowd like that. I mean, we were both in S.A.D.D. together just like you and Gia. But, she did it."

"So…your point is, sometimes it just happens?"

"Sure. It shouldn't have, you're right. You never should have said what you did. But, the point is, Michelle understands, and she cares about you. And, you'll keep improving, just like Gia has, because you helped her. And, you can help Michelle, too."

Stephanie thought about how Gia had brought up Michelle's first day of Kindergarten. "That's true. I see potential in Gia."

"She has a lot of potential, Steph. She just needs careful monitoring so she doesn't blow it by becoming pregnant or getting hurt badly."

"You're right, she does. So, how do you think Kimmy's doing for you?"

"Promise you won't tell?" Stephanie nodded. "I might be happy if she gets someone who's breathing." We laughed together. "That's between us, though."

She noticed Gia wasn't paying attention; she was still playing with the twins. "I know. I wouldn't want anyone bringing up how frustrated I am at Gia sometimes; or at myself now yet." She chuckled. "I've always kept it quiet, though - even when I read

your thoughts about Kimmy in your diary."

"You're right. I guess you really could have used a few things, like that time when I talked about an annoying friend and she didn't know I meant her, to drive a wedge between Kimmy and I."

"Yeah. I couldn't hurt you like that, though, Deej." Stephanie seemed to have trouble believing she was about to say this, but she added after a deep breath, "We play teasing each other, though we know we don't mean it to be mean. But, while I might have acted a bit glad because I thought you were going to stop being friends on your own…I could never hurt a friendship that way. She needs help." I nodded. "Lots of help. Lots and lots of help. Lots and…"

I held up a hand. "Okay, that's enough."

Stephanie – Tues., May 2 – Michelle Home; Remembers Feelings:

Technically, Michelle remembered feelings first when she came home. I could have gotten off the hook when she smiled as Dad and the others sang her bedtime song, as she smiled like she felt comfortable with it.[377] Still, Gia could have argued, "The bet was about a person." I'd sung it a bit at times, anyway.

Kimmy - Wed., May 3 – How Kimmy found Steve:

I'd found someone - my boyfriend's cousin. But, I wondered about Steve. I started calling all the restaurants in the phone book in alphabetical order on Monday, to see if they'd seen him. I couldn't remember where he lived or his last name.

Thankfully, Friday around suppertime, after I told D.J. about Duane's cousin, one of them called back. I'd told them who I was and what I was doing, and this place had an employee who knew more about Steve than what he liked to eat. Only thing was, this guy merely recalled his neighborhood from talking to him, and an approximate number.

I started too far up the street, and got frustrated after a little while. So, since I knew I was close, I walked a few more blocks on Friday and started calling, "Steve!"

D.J. - Friday, May 5:

Kimmy was right - restaurant people would be sure to know him, but she'd made the mistake of going alphabetically. His favorites were all later in the alphabet. Plus, there are so many in the Bay area. Still, this plan gave her the right neighborhood.

Now, she just kept shouting, "Steve" as if she'd lost her dog. Then, people started calling "Steve" with her, and she explained it wasn't a dog she was looking for, but a guy. After that, they figured she'd lost her mind instead, till she explained.

Kooky as that plan was, it worked. Steve heard the commotion, and went to investigate. "Kimmy…I don't know where to start asking questions," he confessed when he walked up to the crowd and they explained how this mess had begun.

He'd read about the accident in the paper, and thought about calling and asking how things were. She said Michelle had been home, and that I was thinking of not going to the prom. But, she told him to put on the tux he bought for last time anyway, just in case. He was really impressed by the lengths Kimmy would go for a friend - though at the same time, I'm sure he shook his head and pondered just where she got some of her ideas. It made me wonder at times, too, but she is a great friend.

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[377] Feelings always return first. It clearly makes her feel good & begins the process, as may being home.

Stephanie - Sat., May 6 – Remembering Stephanie First:

Michelle felt more secure around me than anyone. She scurried into bed with me – her bed - after a nightmare once. Mr. Bear helped, as I got him off the top shelf, and cuddled her, with both of us holding him; she always wanted him as a toddler. Little things added up that said, "Michelle is comfortable enough around me that – while she doesn't know why – she remembers me." She'd felt more and more like there was something familiar about the situation.

When she thought I was her sister, and that she had looked for me some other time, I didn't argue she recalld too little of her life – or of that event - to count. Gia won fair and square. I'd hoped she would. What that time was came today again for sure, but had the other day, too.

Today, I guided Michelle toward her bed when she came up for a nap. She'd slept in mine, aside from the one time. Today, I suggested she sleep in the other one - her real bed. Then, we talked for a moment as I rubbed her back. Soon before she dozed off, she remembered me helping another time she was in a strange place; specifically, that first day of Kindergarten. It came very naturally.[378]

I shrieked with glee out of her range, and dashed down the steps. Dad warned it might come back more slowly than it did, but somehow, it all came back then.

Prayer was the most important part there; with everything, really.

Steve:

I was more than happy to take D.J. to her prom. I understood how tough it must have been for her, with how she'd worried about Michelle back when we were together.

The important part was, Michelle recovered completely. As we left, we began discussing the future. Somehow, we started talking about all our hopes and dreams so naturally, it was incredible. It felt way different than last time. We weren't just there because we wanted to be together. We were there because we wanted to become friends.

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[378] After feelings, general and early memories come, with similar situations. Reasons she'd recall Steph first: 1. Michelle wakes up from a nap in her own bed when she slept in Steph's. Only Stephanie considered telling Michelle which bed was hers, so she had to be comfortable enough to believe her; 2. The similar experience to "Double Trouble" - looking for Steph for comfort in a strange place with who she thinks are strangers here would make her more comfortable around Stephanie; 3. A hint of recognition may be there the morning after she comes home when Steph apologizes; Finally, 4. Steph says "She thinks I hate her" - if it was the first Michelle even felt really comfortable, Steph would have said, "She remembers me."

However, she clearly recalled her earlier, emotionally and likely more.

As noted, they stretched the finale; in the "real Tanner universe," Michelle starts to recall the next day, then there's a few days in between that and her total recovery. All of this makes it medically plausible.

VI. “FULLER HOUSE” – THE SERIES – a.k.a. NetU

Interlude – Great Scott! Another Universe!

The “Full House” Chronology was completed in 2009, after a few revisions. It made sense to include the Book Universe since books exist, especially since some were logicaly TV Universe. And, since everyone wanted to know what happened after the series, Steve and D.J. marrying made sense.

Unless you skipped to here, you saw a few pages were added before this. Overall “Fuller House” (here called “NetU”) kept things consistent, and not much needed added, but some was, especially with the Gibblers. NetU stuff is footnoted elsewhere but there isn’t as much here; though there will be a little playful “fourth wall’ stuff or lampshading to explain some things, like Michelle. :-)

. With them not together after the prom, an obvious Point of Departure is Steve and D.J. not kissing (or something romantic). The prom comes up several times in the “Fuller House” series/NetU. Steve says he “should have proposed.” You’ll see they marry rather fast in what was created before (called “TVU”). The wait is for reasons like D.J. wanting to be done with college.

Interestingly, a book helps NetU a lot. Just as some books are TVU, it’s deemed NetU as you’ll see. Since D.J. and Steve aren’t together there’s a trip to Hollywood, one that means a lot more for Michelle and Stephanie.

(Stories often rose from the Chronology, you can read “Working With the Stars” in the “Fuller House” section on Fanficiton.net for more details. “Operation Busy as a Beaver” tells about Michele and the triple wedding.”)

So, what follows is a very realistic universe with a mid-1995 departure.

Time and contact info for Yahoo Group and AIM helpers are much less available now, so episodes can’t be footnoted. Instead, this has a few general pages of pre-“Fuller House” things, with character discussion like elsewhere, and more on the series. Of course, there isn’t the need to fill in gaps anyway in “Fuller House,” More is on how they got where they were in NetU.

D.J.’s career choice is trickier, but veterinary school (not nursing) isn’t a big leap – her patients are just animals. As noted, she had many interests; the fact the consensus was a medical field shows we made pretty good choices with TVU.

Things which are the same in the original TVU post-Series as in NetU (Michelle’s recovery, Gia, etc.) are in part VII, “The Love Just Keeps On Growing.” Chiefly, for “Fuller House fans who wonder, it shows what would have happened had D.J. and Steve stayed together, which many wonder. Indeed, a few tidbits from the “Fuller House” series are there also, since they are true also of TVU, like Kimmy’s community college and getting to California U. after a couple years, or her slowly getting to where she opens her party planning business, though there is here, too.

The Book Universe will be covered later with the girls more mature. It features more changes given a 1984 departure.

Jesse and Becky adopted in TVU post-series – another thing we got right! They still adopt Pamela, but in NetU don’t have kids we had them adopt. So, Denise’s family adopting them is in the first part of NetU. Others from NetU make brief apperances, too. Steph’s dance teacher Karen makes one in NetU which is similar to the mention of an adoption in TVU of a girl mentioned much more in the Book Universe part.

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1. Stardom – Pre "Fuller House," – May, 1995-2014

D.J. – Sat., May 6 - A Kiss Is Not A Kiss:

I really wanted that night with Steve to be memorable. Sure, we'd kissed on the doorstep before leaving, and when we got there things were pretty good. But, it wasn't as romantic as I'd hoped. Sometimes, greater expectations ruin a great time. I think that's what happened. Well, and our first dance at the prom.

See, that's when I hoped we'd find such beautiful romance - a springboard to a lifetime of joy. Instead, we got distracted big time.

I happened to glance outside at a dog in distress. I almost didn't, and someone else would have s taken care of her. Had I been proactive from the start, I wouldn't have simply because I 'd have had my mind on helping my sisters so much before, I'd have really wanted the break, though I'd have been more committed to taking it slow with Seve, too. Here, however, it was different. I wanted it to happen too fast, but then there was that cute little pregnant doggie.

Steve – Who Let the Dogs In?

D.J. happened to glance at it, and it was cute. We talked about it – she especially did – and we decided we had to go out and help it.

It turned out the dog was ready to deliver. Someone else had done a few things, but D.J. remembered from Comet's birth just what to do. She was a real pro already. We kept trying to get back to the dance floor, but each time we did, something else came up that kept us from kissing. It was like in "Back to the Future," where Marty had to make his parens kiss in order to be born. Only, we didn't have a Marty. We tried, but we found ourselves having a great friendship, and that was all.

We last saw each other in July of that year, then as D.J. became more and more involved in school, I realized I still loved her. Sure, I got married to someone else, but in my mind, I wanted to prove myself worthy to D.J..

That's why I decided I had to throw everything into going to medical school to be a podiatrist. I could talk for hours about the biology of wrestling, so I knew things, but I hadn't applied myself before. That singleminded passion cost me my first marriage, but I was determined to prove myself to D.J., even after we reunited; my science grades were always good, and I liked stuff like chess.[379] My other grades got better in community college. I didn't have the best in medical school, but I made it.

Kimmy:

Duane and I helped them, too. We didn't have a chance to have that really romantic fling then or later. My hair even got all messed up, which is how my parents usually saw it, though I probably exaggerated when I said they'd never seen it straight.[380] With D.J. and Steve not together, we couldn't double date. Time after those dates was

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[379] He seemed obsessed with D.J. in "Fuller House" at first, but he settled quickly. An athletic temperament can create a burning desire to achieve elsewhere – in medicine or winning the one he loves. His career path is unusual with "Full House" grades, but science grades are the key. He could play chess, so he had smarts, and may have discovered something about how he learned that helped, too. A big upward spiral from community college to college is what medical schools would look at with him.

[380] As elsewhere, things Kimmy say should, if necessary and possible, be taken as jokes, though it's also true that after 25 years she might just not remember if they had.

really what would have helped us, partly since Duane could sort of copy Steve.

Jesse – June 5 – Pulling a Brett Favre:

People don't know this, but I almost retired for good. I went back to music for years, and became a hit, but almost quit to become a family man and focus on the "Smash Club." Then, I started to have second thoughts.

When Danny arranged a trip to the beach to help D.J. get over what we thought was her final breakup with Steve – well, it was for around twenty years – something happened that changed a lot of things.

Michelle – August 7 - Meeting A Movie Star Changes Things:[381]

I met a cool friend named Natalie at the beatch. I was embarrassed not to know she was in movies – Dad said they were actually PG-13 so it made sense I wouldn't have known – but I wanted to impress her, anyway Then, I learned she really wanted to be treated like a normal kid, which we did next time.

We stayed friends, and the following summer, we went down to see her filiming and tour Los Angeles, after months of having written back and forth.

Joey – Aug. 12 - Different Spouse in NetU:

Because of that chance meeting between Michelle and Natalie, Jesse wondered if he could try again; Viper was a good replacement on the Monkey Puppets, but what if he tried touring some other way?

It's like an athlete – he always wanted to perform, and figured he always could. Plus, Steve was Nick's last hope to possibly have a connection to the family, however small, take over the exterminating business. With Steve determined now to go to college and then medical school, and without D.J. and Steve to follow around, and therefore help his dad a little, it made Jesse a little freer, too.

It also meant I could get back to performing. I did one of Michelle's friend's eighth birthday party, but his mom, Suzie, a widow, and I really never had time to hit it off. Oh, we might not have anyway, but I think I might have felt pushed to try to keep in touch a bit more with D.J. still in love with Steve. I mean, Jesse was one thing, but I really wanted to be getting married before the girls; or at least engaged.

Becky – Careers, Not Adopting Yet:

I was kind of disappointed when Jesse didn't retire. I'd hoped tosettle down as a family and adopt in a few years, just like when we'd discussed helping Kathy Santoni if we had to. Still, it would be a few years anyway, and Jesse promised that one day, we would, even if we had to wait till we were past age fifty. I have to admit, as crazy as it sounded, I knew he'd keep that ptomsie; he was good at keeping them.

With him going back to being a musician, he would eventually sell the Smash Club, but that was okay. Nicky and Alex wouldn't have quite as stable an upbringing

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[381] Book, "My Best Friend Is A Movie Star," like most TVU books, is also NetU. It's the basis for several changes that led to "Fuller House" characters being as they are, as you'll see, since they have time to go to Los Angeles. The book takes place partly in spring, '96, but they can meet late in the summer of '95, too. It's likely a common vacation spot for her family, and that gives the friendship more time to develop.

In TVU, they would just meet in spring of '96, and might remain pen pals after the visit, but there's no trip to Hollywood to impact Michelle or Stephanie.

with him not there, so instead of getting really great jobs… well, okay, they did start their own business, but I mean, with Jesse running the club and focusing on radio, I'm pretty sure they'd have done something other than running a taco truck.

Ho knows, maybe it was a part of them that shows they'd have been great at running it when Jesse did turn the Smash Club over to them.

The decline in local television – and TV in general – led to DEanny and I having a national show down in Los Angeles after a while, but that would take a few years; for right now, we just let our show exist in a variety of different forms, including syndication for a few years. Media was changing so fast!

Jesse – Radio Show for a Few Years:

I wonder how long we'd have done radio otherwise. Joey was going to be gone doing comedy a few times, but I could have kept the show going if we'd have to with those brief absences. However, over the next few years, I got the itch to go back to performing myself, and so we just called it a career.

Radio stations rarely played music by the time we did; it was more talk, which bugged me because with Joey, that meant more comedy.

Still, we would have managed if I'd retired for good. However, Michelle's new friend, Natalie, really caused a major chang when we all went down to Hollywood – not just for us, but for the girls.

Stephanie – Dec. 19 – Better Relations With Kimmy; Jimmy Loves Her Guitar:

Kimmy and I were getting along better; it was like before Mom died, when Kimmy had taught me that "Miss Suzy" rhyme. We weren't close yet, it was maybe like Uncle Jesse and Joey when they first moved in.

One reason was because Jimmy seemed to have a crush on me. It was weird because I only ever remembered him as a little kid when we met again years later.

Of course, if he'd been told creamed spinach was ice cream it makes you wonder what he thought a crush meant. I didn't babysit like I might have, though I did a little, and I could get him to sleep by playing my guitar and singing. It was one of his favorite memories growing up; he had a lot of sitters with how many singing telegrams his parents left, and how often they were gone.

I didn't think much of it, though. He was a little kid to me even the day I moved out, and we just didn't see each other when I was back; he was sick for D.J.'s wedding, and Kimmy's was thrown together so fast he didn't make it. He was travelling with their parents a lot once he got to be school age.

Kimmy had had the same experiences, but they'd stayed in state then. She always said they both experienced that in the same way you and a graduate of the same school fifteen years later would speak of an eccentric professor. It's still a shared experience.[382]

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[382] Consensus based on character introduction (how they remember each other) and how it's still plausible Jimmy did all that photography by his mid-20s, given his parents' travels. Kimmy saying in "Full House" ("The Devil Made Me Do It") they stopped having kids after her means adoption was possible, but the description of their parents not being around much lends more support to them taking him with them rather than having the stuff to pass home inspections, etc.; even if Jimmy was a nephew. There would also be more indication of a younger sibling Stephanie or Michelle's age in "Full House." Finally, as noted earlier, Jimmy's and especially Steph's testimonies keep Kimmy's comments from being refutable.

Joey – Feb. 14, 1996 - Dating Gia's Aunt for a While:

Steph and Gia made a good team. While Steph was helping Gia with things – and keeping her out of trouble, as Gia realized she was worth more than some boys thought about – Gia helped her with the family in unique ways.

Even with Steve and D.J. – and therefore her and I – being in relationships, they would have since Gia loved helping by now. As it was, I was depressed over not having a date once again over Valentine's Day, so they put an ad in the paper; at 9 AM on a Sunday when everyone else was at church. Eventually, they set me up with Goa's aunt, and while it didn't work out well, I appreciated it.[383]

I decided I'd just focus on comedy for a while – and it really worked.

Stephanie – June, 1996 – The Visit - and Poem - That Launched A Career:

I was at the age when kids really get into things big time, almost obsessed. Sure, some get into all sorts of stuff without committing to one thing, but even they're obsessed with finding out a little about every single thing under the sun. They're just being looked at in the eyes of a society that expects more focus.

I'd written some poems and stuff, and in the back of my mind, I dreamed of one making it big, though I had no idea how a poem did that.[384]

However, I had some with me when we went to visit Natalie on set. I was writing others and so I had my little notebook with me; I'd copied this particular one into my diary. I didn't think anything really special about it, but it meant a lot to me personally because of the circumstances.

It had come from the heart, and spoke of the many emotinals that flooded over me when Michelle remembered me first because of that first day of Kindergafrten. I met a guy who worked in something with production, I forget what. He asked if he coud show it to someone; I said "yes." They loved it, and wanted to know if I ever thought of editing it a bit and putting it to music. I did - it took a while, but it became a hit.

Jesse – Stardom, A Turn For the Worse?:

I gotta admit, I was so proud of my niece. I didn't think about the fact she kinda had a bad role model when it came to what musical stars did.

She didn't go way downhill. She didn't drink as a teen; of course, she wanted to be a role model for Gia and Michelle. She drank as an adult, but never drove drunk; of course, she had a driver. She stopped drinking soon after she moved back in to help raise the boys. And, she never got into drugs.

But, remember how she didn't have the calming influence of an Allie when she'd formed "Girl Talk" a year earlier? That was a symptom that she might get a bit too excited if she made it big. While Gia was getting better, Steph was more like, "Okay, if I

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[383] Book, "The Big Fix-up Mix-up." Joey has an upstairs room, not the basement with an office upstairs like other books. He's normally happy-go-lucky, but if he's moody about not having a date, it's on TV, not books. (Even on TV he only ever was toward Jesse or Danny.) D.J. doesn't have a date, so she's not with Steve, unlike TVU and books. Steph's part is on Sweetest Day if it happens, due to conflict with another book, as shown in Book Universe section, so her part could be Book Universe; TVU has Steph with a boyfriend of unknown duration (it's an idea discussed if there had been a season 9). Joey goes with Gia's aunt, as it's easy to swap friends in this story. (One part doesn't fit Allie or Gia. maybe Mickey.)

[384] Steph's always been a good writer, especially in books, and something had to get her noticed. Each universe has her involved in a different type of writing.

stay away from these things, I'll be fine." So, she knew not to do drugs, she didn't smoke, but she ws still the same kid who got excited bout everything.

For now, she realized she had talent. It took this song a lot longer to really make it – a few years, in fact – before it became a hit. Of course, it wasn't nearly as big as "Boy Next Door" years later.[385]

In the meantime, Michelle was discovering an interest which was only partly connected to stardom. However, it would slowly eliminate the other calming influence in her life, that being knowing she had responsibility with Michelle.

Michelle – How She Started In Fashion:

I'd always enjoyed having fashion shows for my stuff animals and things like that. I loved the looks of the sets and the costumes. I was interested in how a movie star lived her life, but I was fascinated by the clothing.

Remember how I'd been urged to try lots of different interests? This isn't one I'd have gotten into otherwise, but it shows how a visit can change someone. While Joey had taken Nicky and Alex to see the cartoonists and stuff, I wanted to do something on my own, so we wound up talking for awhile about how all those fancy costumes were designed – or how any clothing was.

I loved celebrities, also. I was so excited when I found out Natalie knew the stars of a family and adventure show I loved which had begun as a replacement for Joey's Surf's Up - Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen.[386] I loved them in it.

Joey – Surf's Up Replacement A Hit Adventure and Kids' Show:

When Surf's Up got cancelled – pretty fast – it was replaced by a combination of "Back to the Future" and "Indiana Jones," but with a family element. However, after a year or two, the Olsen Sisters began to become the stars, much like the Fonz on "Happy Days." The time travel element – which had been fun – became secondary to the present day fun. They went back in time for special reasons, but more often, people were brought forward for comical reasons and remained for a while.

Becky – September, 1996:

When we got to meet them and talk about that show, of course Jesse had to ask about that episode where Elvis came forward. The sisters had gotten into movies and other things after a couple years – though the show was still on – and that's how they began their climb in the entertainment world as we knew it.

The girls knew they weren't going to be stars as big as those famous sisters, but they had the right idea; they could be involved in things on the periphery. In some ways, I wish Steph had pushed harder to write – she might have gone to college and studied it and written more of her own stuff and been like Jesse.

Now, though, as she entered ninth grade, she didn't have a babysitting business or anything to help her think about the hard work needed for that. She wanted success, and

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[385] Realistically, she couldn't have gotten in with all those stars without some street cred, nor travelled the world as just a deejay without some accomplishments. While she's urged to make her own songs instead of playing others', she did early on in this universe, and did just enough to get by; "Boy Next Door" became a hit so fast she had to have had some talent before and developed it.

[386] It's canon they exist in the "real Tanner Universe" – the show they appear in is quite logical given the popularity of those franchises at that time. Surf's Up from "Joey Goes Hollywood."

to her, that meant getting a job. D.J. wasn't with anyone right now, and by the time she woud be, Steph was used to thinking of doing her own thing. Not only writing music on napkins at school, but deejaying stuff.

Danny:

Steph wanted stability, but D.J. wasn't with Steve, Jesse and Joey were starting to get more into their careers - Jesse had put another band together – and she felt like she needed to think about what she could do like them. She felt like this was what life should be; she was still impressionable, even though part of her yearned for the close-knit family that she'd become part of again once she moved back in to help D.J..

To her credit, she remained a very moral person, she treated us all with respect; she kept her promises to watch Michelle or the twins when she had to. It's funny how D.J. staying with Steve might have helped with her feeligns and other things, but even as people drifted apart a little, we always remained close.

That caring for others led to Steph helping Michelle in her fashion career, too, even as she used it to get out of babysitting once the next school year began.

Stephanie – Aug. 31, 1997 – Furthering Michelle's Career:

Several days ago, I saw the definition of serendipity. Well, maybe I didn't, I guess I had pledged after Michelle recovered to be her biggest supporter, so I intended this to take place, I just didn't know it'd be this fast.

Darcy Powell was from a different Middle School, but we wound up in high school together; had they arranged the districts differently, we'd have been in the same Middle school. Anyway, she'd designed several of her school sports team's uniforms as they wanted to create new ones.[387] I'd learned about her my first day of tenth grade; I knew Michelle should meet her sometime.

A couple days after that, I learned Dad wanted me to watch Michelle on a Friday night because everyone else would be gone. I had something I wanted to do with friends, so I approached Dad with her parents' phone number – I'd already asked her – and sold it as finding someone who could not only replace me but enhance Michelle's possible career. I knew that was the best way to approach it with him.

Michelle:

Darcy and I hit it off right away. We spent the whole evening doing different things with fabrics and stuff. A while later, I went over to Darcy's house so Steph could have a party at home on a Saturday afternoon. Steph wondered why I had a bag – I told her it was a swimming suit because Darcy had a pool. Steph shook her head and said she needed to learn to ask questions.

D.J.:

Steph would go over there sometimes, too, then. They had fun, but I think she saw it as something for her kid sister after a while, even though Darcy was her age. She just had a different group of friends. Gia was kind of a center spoke, if you will, and enjoyed hanging out with Darcy also as she improved, but Steph became known as the girl who had songwriting potential, which got her into the party life. Steph hung out with kids who

[387] Darcy, a friend from books, is said to do this in at least one book

weren't too wild, but who just didn't focus on family activities as much.

Kimmy and I had plenty of activities, too, now that she'd joined me at California U.. She'd started to date more, but I was more focused on my future veterinary career, and looking into what to do with graduate school.

I wished Steph would be more involved with Michelle, but as time went on and it became apparent Steph had "passed the buck" to Darcy, so to speak, I accepted it. Steph had found someone Michelle loved to be around, a youngest sister herself who really understood her, and who was interested in lots of the same things.

It was after I'd driven Michelle to Darcy's once late in the year that I met my future husband, though we didn't know it at the time.

Tommy Sr. – Nov. 19, 1997 – First Meeting D.J.:

I'd gotten off my shift with the local fire department and relaxed in Anthony's Pizza while waiting for an order. D.J. walked in and noticed I had cat hair on me.

"I'm sorry, I'm getting more like my dad every day; I was going to help you brush that off," she joked. "Do you have a cat."

"I was helping to rescue one. You know kittens actualy do wind up in trees, just like in the cartoons," I quipped.

"Wow. So, have you ordered?" I had. "I'm taking a study break. I just dropped my youngest sister off at a friend's. I taught Stephanie, my middle sister, how to drive, but she had something at school," D.J. explained.

"Would you like to sit together?"

"Sure."

We hit it off fast. In fact, we talked so long, she realized she had had to pick her up – hey, at least this time she didn't wait till Darcy's mom dropped Michelle off. That was something we could all laugh about easily now.

"Let me guess, you met another boy," Michelle quipped as she saw the look on D.J.'s face. She recalled how D.J. had forgotten her at her Honeybee meeting once.

"Yep; I had to rush off, he said he'd wait for a few mintues. Do you want to meet him?" D.J. inquired. "I'll buy you pizza then."

Michelle agreed; it was a very popular teen hangout, and if she could get pizza out of it, she would. Well, unless the alternateive was chocolate, she'd always prefer that.

I saw them enter. "You must be Michelle; D.J.'s told me a lot about you."

Michelle looked at me. "Did she tell you about me now, or when I was little?"

"I don't tell people about your worst behavior; not unless you say it's okay," D.J. promised. "But, he seems like a nice guy."

"All I know about that is D.J. had to be a bit like a mom," I assured her.

"Try a lot like a mom," Michelle said bluntly, though also smiling affectionatelh at D.J.. I could tell they had a really strong bond.

We spoke for another moment, and then I looked at my watch. "Anyway, I know you said you called your order in since you had to get it to go; I have to go, too. I'll see you next Saturday?" I asked, confirming our date.

"Sure."

As I left, Michelle said I seemed nice. It reminded me of something my mom said once; the toughest critic of her boyfriends had not been a parent, though they were tough, it had been her younger sister. I figured I must have done something right.

Danny:

I liked Tommy. Sr. right away, too. I worried about what could happen to him, but I didn't want to cause excess worry. D.J. showed she knew the dangers, too. I wonder, in a way, if worrying about what could happen to Tommy in the line of duty was one more little thing that caused Steph to want to travel the world.

Jackson:

Dad told us that story enough times, I never really gave a second thought to have hard it is to make friends once you're out of school. Teen hangouts like that just aren't around for older people, because they work and have families and stuff.

Mom and Dad took it slow – Mom was really focused on her schooling, but they saw each other a few times over break, and there was something in the news one of Michelle's friends helped with, with Dad's help

Becky – Dec. 23, 1997:

It's funny, you know, we'd talked about adopting again, but then put it on the back burner as Jesse resumed his music career – if he ever really stopped it, which in his mind he probably didn't.

Anyway, there was a biracial baby, Melanie – I won't get into details, but I can't help but think we'd have adopted her had we been looking to; she was a good match.

Someone was ready, though, months later, to give her a good home.

Michelle:

My friend Denise came over while Tommy was here, and asked if he could teach her to do CPR. She said her parents were finally getting to take a child home for a week; her name was Melanie. She had some huge crying episodes, and we weren't sure what had happened when she was really little – I'm sure Denise's parents knew – but she needed a home with a good older sibling who could be a big help to her.

I knew they'd been looking since this spring; apparently Melanie's birth mom was found dead because of an overdose, and there wasn't an adoptive home ready for her, just the foster home she'd been in for a while since the mom finally lost all custody. I guess most people want to adopt babies, not older kids.

Anyway, Denise and her family prayed about it and decided they would start the process; I think Nicky and Alex would have been great for her.

Max:

That's what I love about my family; we're always doing stuff to help others, and so are the people we hang around. We try to be a blessing everywhere. They did even as they went their separate ways a bit more each time. Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky hadn't had to move out due to needing room for adopting, but they moved out the following year. Joey would be going to Vegas full time in a few years. Kimmy was, well, she was Kimmy. And, Aunt Stephanie was eyeing the bright lights of fame.

Stephanie – September 12, 1999 – Selling Her Song:

It had taken over three years and a bunch of rewriting and working, but that poem

I'd given those people to look at three years ago had gone to the proper people, including the copyright office thanks to Dad. Now, it was getting published!

I couldn't believe how long it had taken. I actually had to wait a little longer to announce it – Michelle had been asked to help as a junior helper in a fashion company down in Los Angeles, using the latest in computers to help design things. She was only in eighth grade, but still, I didn't want to be upstaged again.

That was okay – when I arrived home and said I had great news, Dad had said "congratulations" and hugged me before knowing what it was.

\ This was my big break. I'd thought about college before, but hadn't wanted to commit; now – whileI'd be given some money just in case I went - I knew I could just do this. If nothing else, I could sell a few of my own hits, or things I wrote with others, and play others' songs while going around the world. I would really be my own person.

D.J. – Wedding Bells:

I'd announced our engagement weeks earlier, and Michelle knew she was going to design our bridesmaid dresses, though I hadn't officially asked her. So, I was glad Steph had this chance, though I wondered sometimes if she'd be home much. I think Dad was right about her getting away from worrying about Tommy maybe dying in the line of duty. I remembered what Uncle Jesse was like when I was little, and how Mom had wished he'd be home to spend more time with us.

Jackson:

Mary-Kate and Ashley would have their own line, but Michelle got some help and encouragement from them; these were friendly rivalries. Michelle had been such a big fan of the time travel stuff when they did their show – it ended this spring – she was even considered for one video. Although I think they only included time travel in it since it was a slumber party and they could have all those jokes about the Dark Ages.

Ramona – Kimmy in Party Organizing:

There was this story around this time about a guy who had been almost nonverbal at times, it seemed, unless he was quoting stuff like Shakespeare. Anyway, he was finding stardom of a different sort; he was in what would be a twelve-year college career at Harvard, just to get an undergraduate degree.

It would have been fun when that guy – Duane – and Steve met years later to hear them discuss how hard they'd worked to prove themselves. Duane wound up being a motivational speaker. I sure hoped he wasn't doing it to try to win Mom over – that just wouldn't have been the way to do it.

Mom was losing job after job, but now that she was doing even more business courses – she was at California University by this time – she had big ideas about starting her own business. Mom thought about opening her own hair salon, but she had, well, eccentric ideas at times. A friend in college – not wanting to fire her after she'd done a poor job in her salon with all the strange colors and stuffed she created by accident - suggested that Mom should start her own business.

She and D.J. worked together and eventually, Mom would start her own business, but not in hairdressing. Her eccentricities led her to decide to go further and start to plan her own parties. People wouldn't be mad at her for turning their hair green then.Plus, she

had her own design ideas which she could use in the planning.

Se met my dad that way, too; he wanted to throw a victory celebration.

I think Michelle had the right idea when Kimmmy, knowing Michelle was interested in fashion, asked her advice in one of her first parties. Michelle said, "Nobody can match your unique ideas; I won't even try."

Michelle:

I was glad to help others like that – I knew at this point Kimmy needed to do her own thing. But, I didn't think yet about the idea of having to move. I figured I'd do all my work by computer. Still, when I did move to New York late the next decade, I didn't mind. It was like one big family with my designing friends and I, and my family didn't have that togetherness as a real family anymore by that time. Sure, mine was a great family, but a lot of us were ging our separate ways. Before I left high school, Kimmy would have a husband from South America, in fact!

Joey – Helping Michelle Advertise:

We all came back for D.J.'s weddin g; and, Stephanie stayed in town till it was finished. But, Michelle's right, it wasn't like when she was little, and I think she kind of figured the bustle of New York would replace it.

Meanwhile, D.J. had Jackson, and it wasn't long after that Kimmy had Ramona. D.J.'s story was a lot more normal than Kimmy's, with Ramona being born in the back of a cab or something – but that's to be expected.

I guess I expected her move, too – after she graduated high school, Michelle was going to be doing more while going to college, and Jesse and I helped her with advertising ideas for it. I suggested uniting the world through laughter; Jesse thought it sounded like people would laugh at you for wearing it.

We did give her some good help, though, every step of the way. We might have been further apart physically, but the Internet would quickly make things much closer for everyone, so we always kept in contact that way. And, maybe that inspired Michelle to be able to stay in New York sometimes, too, since we could Skype or something anytime.

D.J. – May 1, 2001 – Kimmy's Baby:

We did a lot of e-mailing and even calling via cell phone when roaming wasn't a problem with Stephanie once Jackson was born; she was able to be there for that, although Steph had already gone off and trekked through Portugal with some musical people after high school, doing a bit of music herself but mostly enjoying doing others' songs and just being sort of a party producer herself, though not really a planner like Kimmy; these people didn't plan much.

Kimmy hadn't slept around like Kathy Santoni, but she had met a race car driver named Fernando – whom I never liked.

"Did you see how he was looking at that waitress?" I asked once while we were on a double date, and I went to the bathroom at the same time as she did so we could talk. "He's got a woman in every port."

"Come on, Deej," Kimmy countered, "he can't have someone in every port. He's a race car driver. You can't drive cars on the water. They'd never float."

Same old Kimmy, I told myself. I hoped she wouldn't have to learn her lesson the

hard way. If she really looked into what I thought Fernando was like – which I turned out to be right about, unfortunately - it would be much more painful than just having a bunch of friends ditch you in sixth grade.

"Kimmy, I'm just saing this because you keep talking about him like he's so special, and I don't want you to be hurt. Or worse. I mean, you wouldn't… well, it wouldn't be as bad as Kathy Santoni, but…" I felt ashamed. "I'm sorry, Kimmy, I know you better than that. I just worry, that's all, like my dad.."

"No, it's okay, Deej." Kimmy felt a little ashamed, too. "You do know me. We were having too much fun one night. I haven't found out for sure. I haven't told him yet, either; wait till I do, okay?" Kimmy pleaded with me.

I glanced at her belly – no bulge yet, but… A look of horror came across my face. "You did. Well… if he doesn't want to help, and you keep your baby – which I know you would want to - I'll be there for you 100%. Becxasue you are my best friend. And you will have all the help you need raising that baby."

"Thanks, Deej." We hugged.

Ramona – Help From D.J. Growing Up:

I came into the world months later; Dad did stay for a while, and I think tried to stay faithful to Mom while on the racing curcuit, but I stayed around D.J.'s house quite a bit sometimes, because Mom and Dad fought. It wasn't awful, in fact their Uncle Jesse's parents might have been worse. Except, obviously, Mom was hurt more because it wasn't just anger, this was pain over Dad cheating on her. Plus, she didn't have her own parents to turn to for help, though she had D.J.'s family.

D.J. would tell me often about how she'd had to be the adult in the room, so to speak - when it came to raising Michelle or other little things - a few times. I learned so much from her about coping with that mess. It's no wonder there were times Mom thought I sounded really mature.

Stephanie – June, 2004 –Everyone A Star, Closeness Not There

I enjoyed Ramona, she was cute and full of life and she loved to dance, or at least what a toddler calls dancing. Part of me wished I could have that. Sure, I'd have to give up the fast life, but I figured I'd wait a decade or so and then find out… well, I'd gotten a doctor, too, at D.J.'s advice, and they'd had some concerns after a few tests. It didn't matter now, but in another decade, we'd have to see. Part of me did want a child, though; I wouldn't have to worry about commitment to them. I'd know they would stay with me and wouldn't leave me the way I was scared others would.

For now, I enjoyed watching my little sister graduate, knowing that Michelle was on her way to fame like I was. Oh, I hadn't written lots of songs, but I'd done enough it let me hang out and have some amazing stories with people.

I realized I'd led a really nice life. It would just never be like it was growing up. Every one of us had found stardom in our own way; Dad and Aunt Becky with a show down in L.A., Uncle Jesse with music, Joey with comedy, Michelle as a fashion designer, and even D.J. in her own way.

She'd graduated from veterinary school last year, and I'd returned for that, too. She and Tommy had used Michelle, Denise – whose parents had adopted another girl, Tatiana, by then – and others extensively for babysitting help, and would keep doing so

However, she was committed to being the best mom she could be.

D.J. – May, 2008 – Kindergarften, dance:

I was doing really well as a veterinarian. While the economy would soon take a tumble, and was showing signs of it already – though nobody knew how bad – I knew people would always need pets, and those pets would always need care.

Ramona was pretty young, but since I had Jackson in a shortened Kindergarten program, Kimmy had put Ramona there, too, though they weren't in the same school. They both graduated from Kindergarten this month.

This had its good and bad points. Ramona was already impacted by problems between Kimmy and Fernando, though they weren't serious. She had me to help her, and her closeness to some school friends over the years helped, too. I worried she might not be ready, but she did better than I thought.

Another thing she enjoyed was dance. With the economy about to tank, it was going to be even more important to support Kimmy; people don't throw as elaborate a parties in tough times, though her ingenuity helped there, odd as it was at times. They had Fernando's racing career, too.

Today, because Fernando felt bad about not being there as much for her, he used some international connections to give her a treat – a real live ballerina came to her graduation, just like when one came to Steph's Kindergarften class.

Michelle – Differences from Samantha of the Book Unvierse:

I helped a bit in this, too. Her name was Sam, and Steph's dance teacher Karen and her husband had adopted her. Sam had tons of issues, but thankfully, you'll see how Steph helped her after a few more sections in a world where D.J. is much more proactive. In that timeline, they'll move to our school district just before Sam gets to Kindergarten, because Dad had his office in the fourth bedroom and some random comment makes them consider it, or maybe he has more time and promotes a realtor with a home for sale in a ritzy part of town that he didn't have a chance to in this timeline.

Kimmy:

Sorry for the transdimensional headache. Anhway, in this universe, Sam didn't get help for a few more crucial years. She had lots of insecurities I didn't. Remember, our parents were gone a fair amount but at least they spent time with me growing up. We had a regular sitter. And, they took Jimmy with them a lot of places, too.

Back to her appearance, Karen had helped Sam learn to focus her mind and channel her frustrations into dance. Karen or her husband travelled everywhere with Sam, even some with her international career. It encouraged Ramona that if she felt sad about Fernando and I – we were trying to hide our arguments form her, but we knew she could tell – she could let it out on the dance floor. I told Sam when I saw her that maybe she could write a version of "The Nutcracker" where some really bizarre stuff happens like the mouse doing crazy dances and whatnot. She appreciated the joke.

Max:

Or, at least she hoped it was a joke.

I followed her on Twitter. Rose loved ballet and showed me her account; she

might have retired on top normally, afraid of it bringing back bad memories if she started to decline, since she didn't like sadness. In this timeline, though, she was determined to to keep dancing as long as she could; it would be her life because it was how she coped.

When Kimmy performed like she did that time, Sam tweeted the following: "I never thought you could parody ballet. I was wrong."

Jackson – January, 2009:

Max had been born by this time. While I didn't get as excited about having a kid brother as Mom – and Aunt Stephanie – had about new siblings, I enjoyed it. Mom had wanted us far enough apart so we could help like she had. We had our own rooms, so I figured everything would be fine. They wanted more later, like she'd had growing up.

Little did she know what would happen.

Ramona – Dealing with divorce thanks to D.J.:

The fights, the bitterness between Mom and Papa, took less of a toll on me than they might have because I spent so much time at D.J.'s. In fact, they had enough self-control to wait till I was over ther to argue, though sometimes it got silly as they fought about where to send me so they could have the actual argument.

As much as Mom tried to shelter me, though, eventually D.J. ane she told me a few years later that we'd be moving out, away from Papa, since Papa was too interested in other women. But, he still lovd me. I was glad to feel like it was okay to love him, which I did. My folks were great at making sure I knew, as Mom said, "It's not your fault, and the best parts of Papa, the ones I love, are all what you have. You don't have the yucky parts; you'll never be a macho, womanizing race car driver."

I think Mom secretly hoped to move in with D.J., but while I might have dreamed of it a little when I was younger, now I resisted the idea. I felt like if that happened, I'd be sharing all mys tuff with others. I didn't think about how much love I'd be getting back by being part of such a great family.

Still, there was part of me that really was glad to move in, evern at first – I just wish it hadn't been after such a horrible tragedy.

Max – December, 2014 – The Call Everyone Dreads:

I saw mom crying as I came in from playing outside. I couldn't understand what was wrong – even when she said, "It's Daddy," it still didn't connect.

Jackson knew, though. He picked me up and hugged me and Mom told him to call Grandpa Danny, too, to come over.

The fire chief told us the story. I kept trying to tell myself that Dad had died a hero, but that wasn't enough to ease the pain. Little Tommy, Jr. would never know howe wonderful Daddy had been. In fact, the doctor was a bit worried that Mom could go into labork, it was so stressful. She didn't, thankfully, but while I didn't hide like Steph, I channelled my pain into being even more like Grandpa Danny.

Tommy:

Noboedy expects to die when they go out on a call. The last thing I thought of before I stood at the gates of Heaven was that I was so glad I'd been a part of such a great family all those years. We'd had such great memories; I even had presents I'd hoidden

for each of the boys that they'd have to find sometime later now.

Maybe that was best, though. It would be like a little part of me was still there. Same with Tommy, Jr. being born after I died. From all the stories they'd told me, I knew they were going to make it, even if they didn't know how.

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2. "Fuller House," the Netflix Years – 2015-

Michelle – Jan., 2015 - Stephanie Insists On Helping:

I didn't have much time now, but I caught a private jet home the minute I heard; one of my good friends had one ready when I heard the news. Steph did, too.

Kimmy and Ramona were already there when we got there. We were determined that we'd help D.J. get through this, and we did. We'd had lots of practice.

We knew the importance of unconditional love, no matter how far away we were. I knew it might bring back bad memories for Steph, so I offered to stay a lot longer than I did after the funeral, but Steph refused. She said she wanted to be there; in fact, she preferred doing it instead of me, because she hadn't been back as often. I'd done my part, she said; now, she was a lot freer than I was.

I guess that's something else she had in common with our Uncle Jesse. An "all or nothing" attitude that showed she really could step in and help D.J. raise the boys if it came to that. I was so glad to see her wanting to do that after all these years.

As I thought about it, I had been a bit more of the focus at times growing up. Now, it was her turn to shine in the family. So, I let her.

I made a note to be there for Tommy Jr.'s birth, though. And, I was.

Stephanie – Her Own Reasons; Having Children:

I had another reason for wanting to do this which I hadn't told anyone, of course, As we kept sharing fun stories about Tommy and what a greatg dad he was, I knew I couldn't have children myself. In fact, I determined by the end of the year that I'd tell D.J. this. I knew if I set a goal, I could do it.

I kept thinking about Mom, and the fun she had with us. I knew it was so hard for D.J.'s boys; she'd be giving birth soon, and while Dad would be there for her, it wouldn't be nearly the same as having Tommy, Sr. there.

Kimmy:

Steph had offered to stay with the boys while D.J. went; I would have, but once she offered, I decided I'd go with D.J. to the hospital.

Ramona loved D.J., but she enjoyed Stephanie when she was there, too. And, Michelle told her lots of fun stories about me when I was little. Kids love to hear stories about their parents. I always told her not to be embarrassed – I've always been like this.

Ramona:

Mom always said at the Fullers, "When in doubt, hug." That was never better advice than the last few weeks. Jackson and I didn't always get along, but it wasn't really bad, maybe even better than Stephanie and my mom. Afer all, when it came down to it, we were like a brother and a sister who didn't mind being together if we were behaving; it's just that we got on each other's nerves sometimes.

Mom was really good; she and D.J. were pretty similar in discipline, except she was a bit more permissive than D.J., especially since the divorce. Parents sometimes like to be the favorite at times like that. She punished for the important things, like when I blew out Jackson's candles at his party and rode off on his pony. Well, it was actually a rental for the party, so I was in trouble with them, too. But, when Mom forgot to take the play saddle off my timeout chair and it was still on a day or two later when Jackson came over, well, let's just say it really helped me remember.

I'm just lucky she didn't Velcro me to a wall like when they were little; I'd have been there for quite a while some days.

Max:

I couldn't believe Ramona had been that naughty. By the time I really knew her, especially at times like this, she was super. She gave really great hugs, too.

As dull as Duane sounded, I was sensitive to Ramona's pain. I'd heard how much of a womanizer Fernando had been, and how he'd hurt Kimmy with that and other things. So, while I didn't understand any of that, just by the divorce hurting Ramona, I'd much rather have had Duane around. They kept her from feeling like she had to take sides, but I did – he was on my naughty list. I listened to Kimmy. Ramona said she loved him so much, but he hurt her mom so much when he cheated on her. I couldn't stand a guy like that. Mom and Dad always taught us to respect girls.

Danny – Michelle Encouragers Unity:

As Michelle and I talked quietly after Tommy, Jr. was born, sI reflected on how he'd have it easier than the girls did. I could afford to leave our show for a while, and I'd be a father figure, whereas, we didn't really have a woman for D.J. to get help from till B ecky came along. I mean, Irene was there, but she felt such stress arguing with Nnick so much. It wasn't the best place for the girls to be long-term.

Michelle and.J. had their own special time, and Michelle how she remembered Pam through all of D.J.'s stories, and how that would help Tommy, Jr.. She, like Steph, had felt like everyone was drifting apart, becoming stars on their own, and now it was time for us to work together. She had a clothing empire to run, but she'd be there if she had to be. However, she knew who'd be best. She didn't know about Steph's diagnosis, but she did know what Steph wanted, ddep down.

Stephanie – The Teacher Becomes the Student:

Michelle put her arm around me and sasked tenderly, "Is something bothering you? I could tell, when you held the baby just now."

I couldn't tell Michelle; I was the big sister, I was supposed to help her. "I'll… tell D.J. sometime. By the end of the year."

"Yeah, right." I guaranteed to Michelle that I would. "Okay. I'll trust you. You love being here, don't you?" Michelle asked as I stood over the baby's crib the way Uncle Jesse would over hers after our mom's death.

"Yeah." We talked about the boys for a moment.

Finally, Michelle said I was in the perfect position. "I could, but you have the sixth sense about what tears are what. Or how to help me when I was lonel."

"Is this another of those 'You're a genius' things like when I helped you that first

day of Kindergarten? Because, I gave that up."

"It's still right there," she said, pointing to my heart. "Come on, Steph. I have to leave tomorrow. I mean, I could stay indefinitely, I suppose, and just fly to meetings. But, there's a special, loving, aunt who doesn't have to go, who's a much better leader for these boys than she thinks she is."

"You really mean that, don't you?" I asked. I gave her a big bear hug as I sniffled and said, "I've been waiting for someone to tell me that."

"D.J.knows; she just doesn't want to pressure you." DF.J. agreed as she entered the room, and we all hugge4d. When the embrace finally ended, Michelle added, "When we all started doing our own thing, becoming stars, I felt like this was just normal. Plus, you were giving me my wings, you and D.J. both. But, it hurt you even more, didn't it, when people started moving out? I was busy with Darcy designing stuff, you didn't have any responsibilities, D.J. didn't even stay with Steve."

I beamed – maybe not as much as D.J., but I was proud. "You're right. When did you become so wise, Michelle?" I had to ask.

"It comes from having you two as sisters." We hugged again.

I'd planned on staying anyway. But, my fear of commitment, while I really started to tackle it with Jimmy, really started to be attached there, as I began to see just how much the events of the last decade and a half had led me to where I was.

Now, other, more immediate concerns had brought me home.

Jackson – Feb., 2015:

We were going to need help with Tommy, Jr.. Mom had brought him home, and Grandpa Danny was there, which I loved, but I didn't feel like I could be the leader the way Mom had been for Michelle. I kept things inside, but finally I blurted out, "I'm glad Mom won't have the problems you did, Grandpa Danny."

He knew what I meant. "I know. I married your Grandma Teri really fast, but now I don't know if it was the right choice. I mean, you know how little time we knew each other; I finally got tired of being a widoer."

"It hasn't been too long, I know."

"And now look, since D.J. had her baby, Michelle left again, and I'm here with your Aunt Stephanie helping some, plus Kimmy." He chuckled. "I don't know why, but something tells me she might move in here, too."

I nodded. "Yeah, Mom moved us back into your old house, and it's really helped. I know what she meant when she wondered if she could live here again after Grandma Pam died; it just felt so empty over there."

"I know it's rough; your mom tells me you're not talking about your feelings as much. Look, just be careful you don't become like your Uncle Jesse with that, okay?"

"I'll try."

Danny:

We changed a lot of things around to help the family. I was up here more, though I figured I'd give them the house, but Teri was too busy with her own stuff to spend lots of time here. That was one reason I knew there might be trouble in our marriage.

I had never wanted to think of divorce, but already, I was worried. We'd only

known each other for several months, but I'd been in such a hurry; I mean, I was in my late fifties, and I wanted someone to be with. I figured I'd be retiring in five more years, ten at the most, given what entertainment and the media is like.

Jesse – May, 2015:

We had changed a lot of stuff. I'd decided to leave my full-time touring; gig with the band; I didn't want to be one of those rock and rollers who can't remember their lyrics. Okay, some songs you don't even know the lyrics, but my point is, Becky and I were starting to think about adopting again, finally.

We knew we'd give a kid a great home. Just like D.J. and the others had. Kimmy had sure liked it, even when they were kids. Now, she would truly be home.

Kimmy – Home, Sweet Home and Her First Party She Remembered Planning:

D.J.'s place had always felt like home, no matter where they lived. Ramona didn't like moving, but I knew she'd love it. I also remembered a party I'd planned.

It was one of my first as a businesswoman, a baseball one. We had a model of Fenway Park and all sorts of things for these peope who had moved out here from there. I'd done a variety of things till I could make enough money to start my own business. I'd done a a typical one with a Red Sox theme for the guy's retirement; nothing big, but he'd like my use of the team, and Green Monster, and so on.

So, in late October, 2004, I got the call to plan another party for them, this one to celebrate a very special occasion.

These people wanted me to throw a party for them with the theme of the Red Sox breaking a string of 86 years without a World series title. I copied what the announcer said when the did it, in fact: "You've waited 86 years for this; the Boston Red Sox are World series Champions." I walked past that threshold and said, "I've waited my whole life to say this: 'Home, sweet home!'"

It's fun to have so many great memories of parties I've done. I may be unorthodox at times, but we get results. And, Ramona even joins in the fun.

Stephanie – Not Missing Party Scene:

I never missed the wild scene like our Uncle Jesse had – remember, he moved out once and felt really confined. I didn't. There were a few reasons.

First was what had hit on; I drifted away because others were. But, I longed for a reason to be home, to be part of a group; I had a little fling when some partying friends came by after a few months, but that was like his Dr. Dare stunt; I never wanted to leave once I got back. Then, there was my biological clock, and what I'd tell D.J. late in the year about being told I'd never have kids.

The difference between Uncle Jesse and I was, he was kept in line by thoughts of Mom telling on him about not graduating, or her reaction if he did drugs, joined a gang, etc..I had a conscience that told me certain stuff was wrong, and my family was important and would miss me if something happened. I didn't need the fear of Mom knowing. HE stopped by a few times a year on his motorcycle, I stopped by more and stayed a bit longer. He didn't have a close family growing up, and being with us opened parts of him he didn't know were there; I always knew those parts were there and loved them. I was just afraid of losing them or of not being needed.

I got back to church, too, aftr about a year, on the somewhat irregular basis I had as a kid, but never really shared much with my pastor about the earlier times. So, Kimmy wondered what I meant when I said that once before we were about to meet the Gibblers – well, we didn't, of course, but…. My point is, I wasn't going to bars anymore, though I did make a joke about that then because the image she and Jimmy portrayed of their parents was like some bizarre hallucination. And, that is kind of a stale joke some people I knew told about confiding things in bartenders. I'd never call one that myself, though; as I said, I didn't get into that like some did.

And, though we never showed it because, you know, you'll never see more than 1% of our lives, all that prayer to have a kid really worked. I actually got pregnant with Jimmy. It really was a miracle.

D.J. – Not Much Drinking Even During First Months, Not Afterward:

Our "pack" drank very little, we showed the only times we had. We wanted Steph to feel comfortable, and I knew I needed to loosen up a little bit. I'd never had the worries Dad had after losing Mom, but I did fret some about not knowing what tomorrow would bring, and trying to make sure everything was perfect.

We stayed within boundaries, though, and while we may have also contributed to the renewal of vows not quite on their anniversary, we stopped drinking after the fall of that first year. We wanted to be good role models for the boys. We wanted them to see you can have lots of fun – and silliness even – without alcohol.

Ramona – Fall, 2015 - Renewed Vows, Different Dates Not Knowing Future:

We had a lot of celebrations – especially that first year.. Since Mom and Dad hoped to get married again, D.J.'s Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky couldn't wait. It wasn't quite their 25th anniversary, but at this stage, what mattered weren't the numbers, but the memories. Who knew if they'd have time next Valentine's Day.

This was part of why D.J. chose to celebrate her 30th birthday not on her birthday a couple years later. But, Mom just got everyone doing stuff like that. After all, she was the one with so many different dates for her birthday.

Of course, with Mom and her crazy parents, part of it had been to get attention; she'd had birthdays whenever she felt like it. But, that was the fun of the she-wolf pack. Sometimes you just did things at random because they were fun, and you didn't know what life would bring.

Max – Other Weird Birthday Stuff:

Mom did that in honor of Kimmy and her weird birthdays. They could come at any time; just declare you're having a birthday. Of course, Kimmy had done it to be weird, Mom did it because you didn't know if you'd see your next one at first. However, by her 40th, she was past that pretty much and just doing it to be silly.

I was glad she did it just for that. That's why I did stuff. I even liked to pull pranks sometimes like Joey. Aunt Michelle had grown out of that, but she still loved the stories just as much as we loved hers.

I guess having birthdays at weird times is kind of like a prank, too, when you think about it – it's just a lot more open.

Jackson – Birthday Tradition Spawns More Weirdness:

Yeah, even the numbering was different. Our mom celebrated her 40th birthday when she was 42 one year, for instance. We had other funny things go on , too, in our laid-back California life. My family liked dancing anywhere and stuff; I guess maybe part of it, too, was to help me feel better. I mean, I did try to go back to L.A. with Uncle Jesse once. But, whole dance parties with dozens of people in the streets?

Of course, there is such a thing as a flash mob, so I guess you, our TV pen pals, can decide how much of that happened.

Michelle – At Home for Holidays When We Don't See; "Guess What You Missed":

I loved being there; it was a shame I tended to miss the funniest moments. As one example, when Ramona had her Nutcracker performance, I had missed Thanksgivng that year and was determined to be there for Christmas. I couldn't get there the night before, but I could always watch the video of it, right?

Except, of course, that video happened to feature Kimmy at her weirdest. I also got there after some weird proposals that included Steve needing D.J. to talk to C.J. for her because he was too nervous, and, well… it got weird.

By then, I was used to Max running up to me with this goofy grin and saying, "Guess what you missed?" It's amazing, I always tried to come up with these outlandish guesses, and somehow I'd always be topped. Well, I think once I did guess there had been a cow in the kitchen when Max called me. Yeah, that happened.

Stephanie – Max's Storytelling:

That became a big thing. I'd begun it, but Max picked it up and had so much fun with it, I just let him do it. Sometimes it was Jackson or I, but I think Michelle enjoyed his telling of stuff the most because he could tell stories in such a comical way. He'd start out with, "A cow was in the kitchen," and she'd have to know what was behind that headline. And, he'd have these mannerisms that went along with the abilithy to keep a straight face during the telling that made it even funnier.

Steve – His proposal, dance parties:

That's part of why there's exaggersations sometimes, we love having fun with things like that. For instance, I proposed to D.J. with an elaborate idea that required Kimmy to pretend to break a bone, then have this huge dance thing with a bunch of our friends, with me proposing at the end.

Ramona's friends helped a lot with that – you usually don't get a lot of people to do this, and sometimes we had to only tell them part of the plan; we couldn't tell a hundred people we were going to have them take part in a proposal of marriage, word would leak out pretty easily. But, you could say, "Hey, be ready for a flash mob and a really special ending." Hey, in this day and age things like flash mobs were, well, things.

Max:

I kind of felt bad for celebrities nowadays, though. Of cours,e on the one hand, they could become one easily. But, on the other hand, what counted as a wild scene for Uncle Jesse when he landed in Japan, for instance, was ten times worse.

That's how Grandpa Danny eventually knew the one guy from "New Kids On the

B;ock" would maybe be willing to officiate the wedding. They love to do things for fans, and really love it when they don't have thousands at once.

Jackson – Why Not Tommy Page?:

Mom and Kimmy were really big itno the band, but Aunt Stephjanie had told me about Tommy Page. By this time, though, she wanted to be just like her sister, but also, she had secretly had a crush on the same guy the other two had;, but D.J. had gotten mad at her for it, saying that was her teen crush. So, she shifted to Tommy Page, who Mom suggested to her as a way to get her off the NKOTB guy.

AuntStephanie never told their dad the NKOTB guy was really first, though.

Ramona:

By the time they were adults, of course, Stephanie and D.J. were really close and didn't mind those teen crush things. Had D.J. been proactive from the start, it never would have been a problem. But, as it was, D.J. pretended to go wild over Tommy Page almost to parody Stephanie a bit. She knew she wasn't really going to marry him, but Steph had been so gaga over Joey McInture earlier – and you can say the name, Jackson – that D.J. decided a little payback was in order.

Plus, I think it was a bit deeper for Steph with Tommy Page, only because her hormones kicked in just a bit more. She got all the posters and stuff because D.J. had pushed him as an alternative, but then she liked his looks more than Joey McIntyre's. Then, she bounced back to Joey McIntyre soon after her tenth birthday anyway, so to get the jump on bad puns, it was sort of like he was a whole chapter in her preteen years, as far as celebrity crushes go, and Tommy just a page.

Yeah, you knew my mom would have made that joke if I didn't, too, huh? Actually, Max might have, too. Or Joey. Or, most of us, come to think of it.

Joey – On Jokes, His Kids:

Max is a real comedian. He's a lot of fun to be around. He and I get into these battles of wits that make me wonder why some people compare him to Danny. Although, I guess he does remind me of Danny in that it's like being a little goofy with my best friend. Because Danny's still my best friend – as is Jesse.

Oh, my wife and I get along, but we're in show business, we like to relax and let our kids learn to entertain, too; except, I really needed D.J. to lecture me on putting my foot down when they were little. Having 4 so close together didn't help, either. I should have listened to her advice, which had been Pam's, bout spacing.

We'd tried nannies, but while the kids are okay with them and at school, we never really did anything to enforce limits, they were just so cute.

What I needed was someone to guide me. That Suzie I saw a few times back in 1996 would have helped; so would her kids. I would have been doing some comedy but would have been much closer to D.J. and the others; by that time, Michelle would have been there to help, and Steph would have, too, if we were all staying closer.

It didn't happen, though. It got to one point where my wife would be travelling for six months that I just gave up after a few days and hired a nanny. I couldn't watch all four by myself; it was worse than having Rusty around when he was his wildest.

Come to think of it, I couldn't locate him since I didn't have a last name, or I

would have sicced him on them. That would have been fun; and maybe a series of viral videos. The Internet is a great way to make money now.

Steve:

It was great being back with D.J. – we had to take it slow, of course, Matt seemed like a really good potential father for them, and we had a rivalry like you'd expect given we were guys and especially my personality as a high school athlete.

Eventually, of course, Matt and everyone else realized D.J. and I ere meant to be together. And, Matt ended up as Rocki's stepdad. Whether he and Gia would ever have a kid of their own, I don't know, but he really made that same great effort he did with the boys with Rocki in terms of getting to know her. I guess you could say the Tanners have provided lots of people with encouragement on how to do that.

Becky - On Adopting, Help With Pamela:

My parents were older by this time – my dad would pass away in fall of 2019 and had quite a few issues before that, so I went back to Nebraska a lot. My mom passed away just weeks after he died.

They got to see Pamela, their newest granddaughter, though. We were fairly old to adopt – in our 50s – but Jesse's dad was still around for the first couple years, and we had plenty of friends and friends' kids to help. That Darcy's family helped us with what we might need to know about helping a biracial girl like our newest. Darcy's the one who had helped Michelle and in another universe might have been best friends with Steph; her dad worked at San Francisco State and her mom worked part time with an adoption agency helping minority families, so we had connections; ones which might have helped with the ones Denise's family adopted, too. They believed heavily in everyone working together to help these children; after all, "race" is a human invention, we're all people.

Jesse – Becky's mom's death, the triple wedding:

That's why Becky wasn't around much in the fall of 2019; in fact, her mom died right around the time of the triple wedding. She knew it could happen, and the girls knew she might not make it. Of course, that woud put more pressure on Michelle, because someone was going to have to watch those kids and keep them corralled.

Tommy, Jr.:

Michelle was a fun babysitter. She told cool stories about our dad just like the others do. I get to know him that way. I'm so glad Aunt Stephanie can remember her mom some, too. She was so important for her.

Michelle – What She Did At Triple Wedding:

With Becky's mom dying when she did, I got thrown into a few more things than I'd planned. I couldn't have as much time with my sisters as I'd hoped, because it seemed like I was always having to take someone to the bathroom.

Think about it – Jackson was singing at the wedding – boy, was he good! – Max and he had to do some ring-bearing and help Pamela be a flower girl, and so on. Aunt Becky was supposed to help, but the problem with a triple wedding is that you have to co-ordinate a lot of rings, flowers, and so on.

That doesn't even count the fact that they lost the hall, had a minister unable to come, and a few other things. I know the kids were all glad everything was recorded, even before Becky had to livestream it. Oh, yeah, there was that, too.

Jackson – Considering a Live Stream:

I'd decided to get into computer coding after high school, so it was pretty easy to set up live streaming. It was pretty crazy to think of doing everything at home, but while there was very little camera usage, and the view wasn't great, it was fun to try with the help of the photographer; hey, at least we had one of them.

I don't know if Mom really comprehended that this wans't just going to be on Youtube, it was going to be live – she had so much else going on. Ramona helped me think of a few things which c ould go wrong, which helped me realize that maybe we needed to do this where we couldn't automatically see someone picking their nose or something else crazy that might happen.

Ramona:

Jackson wasn't at the point anymore where he'd do dumb, destructive things. I'd made that thing up about his running naked during a party because I wanted him to think about things. Here, he was at least realizing some of the drawbacks of his plan.

I knew Becky was very important to D.J. and Stephanie, and as exhausted as she was from all the flights back and forth – her parents died within weeks of each other – she wanted to be there. I didn't know if she could be, and so I realized a live stream would be fun. Jackson had actually had the idea weeks earlier, when we knew it was possible things could get a little haywire.

And, when it came down to it, my mom had performed the most outrageous version of "The Nutcracker" I thought possible. So, Jackson was right. We had to take some precautions, but a live stream feed was possible. And it would really help for the future, who knew where that experience could help later.

Max:

If things got really crazy, maybe we could all move to Nebraska, too. As it was, we looked at what could be done. I told them it wasn't much different than watching, say, the famous 1951 playoff game where Bobby Thomson hit that home run. Boy, it's weird to think of the Giants being in New York.

Of course, then Jackson got his sports a bit mixed up and said he thought they still were because of a game he'd seen with the team versus the 49ers. The football team got their name from the baseball team; but, I digress.

Aunt Stephanie had been reading since she was four, and I was really smart when it came to that, too; and my vocabulary. Not off the charts like Michelle's friend Derek, but enough that I was more than ready for the challenge of helping Tommy, Jr. and Pamela with the bubble blowing and flower girl stuff with Jackson and Max pushed into other duties – and Jackson nervous about the wedding and his singing in it, anyway.

Stephanie:

Michelle had to check on Danielle a couple times, too, because Jimmy… well, he kept that bag over his head to make sure he couldn't see me at times, and I was sort of

busy. Along with helping Ramona do the party planning stuff because Kimmy was sort of busy, too. Remember, we were moving, too; or wanted to act like it, although part of us figured we'd ask if we could stay.

So, with the jet lag, too, incidents like the car in the kitchen weren't the only ones that wound up beign repeated. Another one very nearly was.

Tommy, Jr.:

Max came to me, and I said, "Shh, Aunt Michelle is sleeping!"

Jackson:

Yeah, as the minister came up, we realized Aunt Michelle wasn't there; she was supposed to check on Danielle almost an hour ago. We got a delay as Grandpa Danny and Uncle Jesse talked,; Max said to check where Danielle slept.

Max:

We only had time for one guess, I figured if we hurried, we could do it.

Thankfully, we ran down there and then Jackson ran back and got in place while I helped Michelle groggily walk out the back door and stand just far enough away where she wouldn't be as much of a distraction, but where she could see. She missed Kimmy and Fernando; we tried to signal them to go long with their vows.

Ramona:

Everyone was a bit frazzled with the potential move and of course the wedding. But, what was really neat was how Stephanie told me later that day she was pregnant. I wasn't going to spoil the surprise, but I wondered how Mom felt. After all, she'd carried Danielle for nine months. She was happy for Steph, though.

Kimmy – Michelle offered to be surrogate, but Kimmy insiusted:

It wasn't just about the miracle of Steph being pregnant; I knew she'd prayed so hard for that. It was the fact I could help her.

Michelel had offered to; in fact, she offered to even before Steph decided to do it. Steph wanted to wait for the right match, though; not only that, but one who wasn't so far away. Michelle woyuld have to uproot her own family to do it, and I insisted on doing it.

I felt bad about how I'd teased so much; I mean, sure, I knew my limits, but still, I wanted to show we were friends. They'd welcomed me so much, and the whole family had shown so much love to me, I had to repay them.

Beign the surrogate was the best thing I could have done.

Jesse:

Becky was glad to see the wedding live streamed, though it sure was weird to have it done like that. She called and woke Michelle up early that morning – meaning there was even less sleep for her – because she couldn't get hold of me.

We were ready for it; I caan't say I took it in stride necessarily, but I had always been good at putting on a brave face when things went wrong. They'd been married for so long, and I'd heard of plenty of couples who died real close to each other. So, when her mom started to go downhill soon after her dad died, we kind of figured.

Becky:

I still tried to get there fast, I figured since they werne't exactly all going on honeymoons right away I might catch them sometime. After all, it's not like we did a lot of things in order. It wasn't just the birthdays, as we showed, Jesse and I renewed our vows in a totally different month.

Jackson:

Fans of TV shows should be accustomed to the fact it's rare when a show has every single episode aired in order. There's not just the normal postponements by sporting events or breaking news, there's the fact some episodes are saved for a certain time for story-telling reasons.

Max:

For instance, the triple wedding happened soon after Thanksgiving. But, does anyone ever tell you that? No, people should have to think on their feet sometimes. If you tell someone a story about Thanksgiving, and the very next week, they tell you about the first day of school that year, do you think Thanksgiving came before that? Of course not

We mentioned how there were home movies of everything for eight years. Well, even Grandpa Danny got a little quirky with things. For instance, he has the fall of 1990 totally out of chronological sequence for reasons only he can understand.

Ramona:

Maybe it'd be good to get back to our lives. Nicky and Alex were in Nebraska to be with the girls' Aunt Becky, too. Jesse had been in contact back and forth, but Becky understood he had a lot on his hands, too. He was just thankful the boys were with her.

Becky – Food truck adventages and disadvantages:

The boys' food truck was actually doing well. Of course, we're used to actually going and sitting down in restaurants; the food truck business is really competitive in large cities like that but it is doable.

One of the benefits is that it's mobile; you can go anywhere with it. If there's a party or big sporting event or something, you're there where the crowd is.You can set up and tear down pretty fast, too; it's like a mobile restaurant.

The problem is that it's so out in the open you have to be way more cautious than usual about pests. Jesse's experience as an exterminator let him give them lots of advice and help as far as this is concerned, but you're always on the lookout if you own one.

Another problem is you have to do a lot of work advertising. Before the Internet, I really don't know how anyone with a food truck survived. Because you don't have a central location you can't get lots of steady patrons who say, "Hey, that place on such an such would be a good plce to eat, let's go there." I mean, sure, if they know where your food truck is they can go there, but then where do you sit?

The restaurant business is rough, anyway. Running a food truck is even harder. But, the boys have the determination to do it, that's what matters.

D.J.:

If we don't all split up like we did, Nicky and Alex would have seen our Uncle Jesse continue to own the Smash Club and taken over, doing something with food there. They might have also tried out for football; they'd have been okay, like Jackson but playing receiver because we didn't know enough about concussions then. But, also like Jackson, they didn't have the athletic skill to go way beyond high school.

Things worked out okay, though. My boys and Ramona remained close, and we knew each trusted Jesus as Saviour at an early age – their behavior was a lot better than what I had to deal with since Dad ignored Michelle – but they knew they fell short of God's perfection. We weren't consistent churchgoers but we tried, and they knew that unconditional love and freedom to choose from Him as well as us.

We always tried to have fun in the middle of any crisis. We wanted to be great examples. And, despite the problems, I think we showed it.

Michelle:

You never know what'll come from one choice. Some things might have been really different if D.J. and steve stay together. Some might have been mostly the same. I doubt Steve has the money as an exterminator to fund the purchase of Uncle Monty's, but with money from the Smash Club, theat's where Nicky and Alex would push to have it become a partner with the Smash Club. So, it'd all work out. We'd get through it with the same unconditional love, and help others do the same. Just like we always do.

Stephanie:

Micherlle and I would have had different careers, too. But, we'd have been happy either way. Because, you know how they say "they lived happily ver after"? Some people badmouth that and say it's impossible. But, that's because they're not thinking of the fact that happily is an adverb – it goes with the word "live."

It's not saying everything would be happy. It's saying the people made a choice to live happily. To deal with everything together, as a family, with unconditional love and care for each other. Just like we always will.

VII: THE LOVE JUST KEEPS ON GROWING - May, 1995-;
a.k.a.: D.J. and Steve stay together
Interlude – With Steve, or Not With Steve

Fans aren't the only ones who wonder: "What if D.J. and Steve stayed together after the prom?" They themselves do. As you'll see, many things – Michelle's recovery, etc. – are the same early, but the gap widens later.

"Fuller House," here called NetU, shows when they didn't stay together. It's obviously not the future for the Book Universe, where many things change from 1984; D.J. never sees that dog and wants to spend her prom with Steve anyway as it's a break from being proactice in the Book Universe, so they have that long, romantic kiss, just like they do here. Books that are TVU are also NetU.

It was mentioned in the NetU portion what changes occur which cause things to be different in "Fuller House" from what's below. Now, as you read, you can consider what things are the same. Even Tommy will be back – there actually could be someone he marries, but who? You'll find out.

What follows before we get to the Book Universe answers the question on many peoples' minds – what if D.J. and Steve had remained together?

1. Doing it Right This Time - May 1995-Sept. 1996
Michelle – May 8 – D.J. and Steve as a Couple, Plus Recovery, Certain:

I'd been so excited to hear how romancit it was at D.J.'s prom. She said someone else had taken care of a cute little pregnant dog; I'd wanted to hear about that almost as much. She loved helpng people, and who knows, maybe that tips the scale and she goes to veterinary school if she does that.

As it was, while Steve hadn't proposed, they discussed marriage a bit, and that they were going to take it kind of slow but if things worked out, they'd like to marry once D.J. graduated from college.

I still struggled a bit with my brain getting used to everything, so Steph came to school with me my first day back. I could do more than I thought, and the kids were all so helpful. I'd really remembered her for a week, I just hadn't known it for sure till a couple days after I felt comfortable with her. Friends, those names I struggled with, but she helped me with memory aids till I was comfortable.

Danny – Dr. Steiner, Michelle Wants To Jump Again:

We had a visit with Dr. Steiner, who had helped Steph after the earthquake, jst to make sure, since it would take a while. Michelle was allowed to control her recovery, and she said she didn't want her last memory of jumping – or horses - to be the accident. That was the Jesse in her. I let her, as hard as it was for me, once she was cleared for activities. She never had another problem after a few more weeks of recovery.

Stephanie - May 27 – Plans, Gia, D.J.'s College Choice:

Gia had been ecstatic when I told her Michelle had recovered. She refused to let me off the hook with our bet, but I didn't mind one bit.

Michelle wouldn't be allowed to play sports for a couple months, or be outside at recess for the last month of school, but she recovered fully. She'd wandered off, but the amnesia was scary enough, so we didn't punish her – lack of recess or sports was like a

punishment. She only remembered that she didn't remember, but that in itself is scary for anyone, especially a kid. She loved playing, without much responsibility, but she was starting to enjoy taking on more. The time without recess or sports was a very good lesson as far as what could happen when she wandered.

D.J.'s graduation was Friday, June 2nd. Kimmy would be graduating, too. Tonight, they had a double date with Steve and Duane. Gia and I watched Michelle and the twins. Gia was glad to be getting to know Michelle, while I enjoyed being the big sister I always should have been. Gia anxiously followed my lead.

Once the others were in bed, Gia and I sat in front of the TV with a video. Before putting it in the VCR, I asked Gia, "Did you ever think of being a teacher?"

"I don't know. Tonight was kind of fun." Gia appeared unsure what to think. "I never thought much about my future. Before I met you, part of me didn't care. Your dad and Joey don't know what it's like to live through a really rough divorce."

"I guess not," I admitted lowly, remembering what she'd said about her family struggles. "Aunt Becky says lots of kids our age don't think about the future. But, I think you'd make a great teacher or nanny."

"Maybe. It might be fun to put another band together, but unlike you after you and your uncle talked about the right way to do stuff, I'm just not ready to put that much effort into rehearsing, preparation, and everything else."

I nodded in agreement. Gia needed to learn to focus on something attainable, anyway. Playing in a band was very hard, and something we never did again. I told Uncle Jesse he hadn't turned me completely off of music, though he probably did push me a bit because he wanted me to succeed, just like his dad had done with him.

"What about you, Tanner?" Gia inquired. "You've probably got it all planned." Sometimes, she called me by my last name, at times in a slightly sarcastic way. I didn't mind; it was her way of showing she thought I was a little too good. She still didn't comprehend fully why it was so much fun to behave well. Uncle Jesse got better, though, and I knew she would, too.

I had to laugh. "I wish! I can tell Dad and your mom aren't going any further." Gia agreed. "Uncle Jesse still hasn't found someone to run the Smash Club. Joey and Michelle's teacher aren't close since she's still got Michelle in her class, and likely won't be. The only ones who seem to know what they're doing are D.J. and Steve. And, even D.J. still has her acceptance in at three different colleges."

"Well, what would you like to do? You seem like you'd enjoy teaching, too," Gia remarked, as she considered my positive traits.

I admitted that teaching dance would be fun. "I guess so. What I really want is a great husband who's not demanding, who lets me run the household, then five or six kids someday, and something to do on the side to take a break from being the great mom our mother was. And, I guess teaching dance could be that side thing."

D.J. burst in the door. "Steph, I made a decision," she proclaimed, beaming as she zoomed in, with Steve, Kimmy, and Duane trailing. "Is Dad home yet?"

"Cool," Michelle said from the top of the stairs. She put a hand over her mouth.

"Come down here, you," D.J. said light-heartedly. She didn't mind Michelle sneaking around like this – it was entirely safe, just like I'd have done, and came from a girl who was starting to be very good. She was even losing that last bit of bad attitude, thanks to that scare with the accident.

"Yeah, and next time, go to bed when we tell you, or I'll tickle you like crazy," Gia promised as Michelle came downstairs.

I was proud. Gia was being friendly, not too condescending, and willing to be a little silly. Sometimes Aunt Becky wondered if Gia tried to copy me a little too much at times. But, that was certainly better than making destructive decisions.

"He should be here any minute, Deej," I answered.

After we talked for a few minutes, Dad and Joey returned from their dates. D.J. motioned for everyone to sit, and then stood in front of all of us as Michelle climbed into Dad's lap. "Well, as you know, I've been torn between several schools since Stanford rejected me. I figured Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky wouldn't be back from their 'date night,' but I had to tell you. I reached a decision."

"So, when will you tell us?" Gia wondered aloud.

"Right now. I know you've said I might change majors, and it's true. Having to help Michelle, plus the volunteer experience, brief as it was, have made me think. Maybe journalism's not my thing. There's a lot of attack journalism. I don't want to feel trapped into tearing people down. I want a profession where I can help people."

"You'll be great at whatever you do."

"Thanks, Dad. You've always been so great at not pushing me to go where you went." She put a hand on his shoulder and said, "San Francisco State was a close second, so maybe this will be a lesson to you. But, I'm going to California University."[388]

"All right!" several people shouted at once.

"Will you still live here?"

"For the first year anyway, Michelle. Quite a few students live at home. I know you and Steph will behave, but Uncle Jesse's right. I want to save for my own place, and not worry about on-campus housing costs. Plus, Kimmy and I discussed some things."

"She said I probably couldn't get my grades up enough," Kimmy elaborated.

D.J. nodded slowly. Steve had attended a great community college that helped him get into a California college recently. However, Kimmy's prospects were grim.

Ramona: Her Mom's Improvement:

Summer school is for before you graduated, when you're in the system, but their uncle suggested it since that was all he knew; my mom would graduate, though barely.[389] But, knowing the problem helped. She got to college after a couple years of community college like Steve had.

Mom had issues, though. The only place she never got fired from was her own business. She loved doing her own thing. She liked California U. once she got there, but even then, she'd applied herself more so she could be with D.J..

I would say it gets weird for me, but I'm half Gibbler, so I guess it was normal. With D.J. marrying Steve, Mom and I didn't move in with them years later. Instead… sorry, no spoilers. But here's a clue. Let's just say either way, D.J. was a great help to me. I was one of several people helping this someone, who had really needed help since,

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[388] Canon from "Fuller House" series. Book description mostly matches San Francisco State, but California U. is fictional – with a nod to the Beverly Hills 90210 one. You'll see a different choice in BU is easy, but the Point of Departure is so close she almost surely goes to California U. in NetU and TVU. As the mother figure in books it's more logical for her to live at home, but she's there in books that are clearly only TV canon, too. Students can be in sororities without being on campus. It's never said she lived in a dorm.

[389] "Taking the Plunge"

oh, around 1993. I felt so proud to make a difference.

D.J. – Kimmy's problem and Gia's advancement:

We all tried to cheer Kimmy. However, I had to break it to her. Community colleges she'd applied to had already rejected her,

"Kimmy, I know you may not want to discuss this in front of everyone…" If Michelle's behavior was embarrassing for her to have brought up, then this would really be embarrassing to Kimmy.

"That's okay, Deej. They all know I'm dumb," she said with a hint of sadness and disappointment. I felt it, too – and to think, in our more innocent days, we'd thought we could both be Congresswomen.

She was going to Heaven, she'd trusted Christ as Savior in her middle teens – but that was a long way off. Life here could be quite frustrating for someone like her.

"Well, we talked about getting Kimmy tested to see if she has some learning disability." I was a tad doubtful myself, I have to admit. "I mean, maybe, if we found something…" I looked at the others, hoping they'd try and encourage her.

Still it was hard to figure out what that might be, although dyslexia was possible. Yes, she could read and write, but there were different types, some more severe. Perhaps her copying me so much was because she could copy words, but forming them in her mind was a lot harder. Who knew, which help, maybe she'd go from community college to California U.. She wasn't confident, though.[390]

"Deej, let's face it. It's too late for that," Kimmy declared. "What would it matter? Even if I wanted to get into the clown school Garth went to, I couldn't. I don't like walking around with a wild outfit."

Stephanie looked up and down at the bright, flashy swirls in no real pattern on Kimmy's blouse, and the pants that were a glow in the dark orange, matching several of the swirls. "You're such a Puritan when it comes to clothing," she said sarcastically.

"Well, the clothes aren't bad. I just don't want to wear a weird wig and makeup." She turned to me and said, "If I was in first grade, it would make sense."

"Derek didn't find out till third grade," Michelle remarked.

"Derek? He's a human dictionary," I said with a laugh. "What would he have?"

Michelle explained that, "It's a mild type of autism. He has trouble relating to people and understanding how to talk; that's why his voice sounds kind of funny. He's very uncomfortable in groups, so he blends in with his surroundings.[391] Plus, he's very literal.[392] But, he's crazy about words. He reads the dictionary for fun."

Stephanie smiled proudly as Gia walked over to Kimmy.

"Look, I know you don't think you have much hope. But, everyone's got a reason to be here." Gia tried to think of some of the things Steph had said to her. "If you had learned you had something back then, maybe you wouldn't have stayed in the same school as D.J.. And, you're starting a new part of your life now. Think of it as

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[390] Like when she wrote "What America Means to Me," and copied D.J.'s name; possible if on the level of Theo's on "The Cosby Show," but without the benefit of is encouraging parents. The "Fuller House" series shows she eventually got there, but after community college like Steve.

[391] "The Play's The Thing"

[392] "We Got The Beat" – he thinks when something's wrong with his stomach it has to be bad food. When Michelle assures him it's just stage fright, he asks how Michelle can know since she's not his therapist; so he sees a therapist for something, and this is quite possible, as is some compulsion.

Kindergarten for adults."

"She's right, you know. It can be lots of fun, if you don't get sand in your shorts when you play in the sandbox," Joey said.

As the others gave him weird looks, Gia continued. "You'd get tested now because you're ready to look for jobs. Stephanie says you've blown a lot of chances. But, you still have some."

Kimmy thought for a second, then finally agreed. What did she have to lose?

Gia smirked at Stephanie, recalling that Stephanie had said many of the same things to her at different times as far as making choices and having a future. "Go ahead, Tanner, you want to say it. You taught me everything I know."

"I think we all figured that, Gia. You couldn't have said that a year ago," Dad said proudly. "Besides, Steph hears me boast about her all the time, anyway. It's like that Elizabeth who Michelle's friends with now, except her mom's gone from boasting about her horseback riding to her lifesaving skills. Michelle's life wasn't in any danger, but we didn't know that, and she kept so cool with the paramedics on site there. And, well, I guess I brag about her a little too, huh?" he asked Michelle.

Michelle agreed, looking up tiredly. "When can I have a friend like Gia to help?"

"I'm sure you'll meet one. D.J. and Steph will both be around to guide you. But, I'm sure you'll be the same great friend and encouragement they are," Danny finished.

He was right; Michelle had matured a lot. And, maybe my worries about her were overemphasized here. At her worst she was still good compared to some kids, and she had times when she was very well behaved when younger. It just took her a while to become an outstanding role model, since I wasn't proactive from the start.

Kimmy - June 1 – A friend who made a difference:

I didn't want to think about what might have been, but to tell you the truth, D.J probably could have talked me into getting tested, anyway. Or, at least, tricked me into going by pretending some gorgeous looking guy was there.

As it turned out, I had a few minor problems. Nothing serious - I would have stayed in the same school as D.J., although Gia made some good points about that. However, it was enough I needed to be taught a new way to think when I studied. I needed to learn to study, period - I'd refused to think after a while, as it was just too frustrating. I was really glad I had D.J. to copy.

It would still be rough on my own, though. However, while I wouldn't be a Congresswoman like D.J. and I planned to be, I'd been a president once, and I could open my own business. At least I had an excuse for my grades, if not my work record.

As it turned out, D.J. was right about something else, too. When I applied, they were impressed by all the things I did overcoming my disability, including the class presidency one year. It's a good thing D.J. pushed me to be active in school. All that stuff I did with her, and then following her advice about testing, was what enabled me to do more than just sit around doing nothing all my life.

D.J.:

Kimmy had herself and her family to blame for many problems, of course. She could have tried a lot harder, and her parents could have sensed the problem. They never even tried to get tutors. They either didn't care, or at best, figured we'd be able to help.

Still, she'd be able to get past her problem better now since she knew what it was. I'd made the right choice staying here.

Stephanie - June 2 – Graduation:

As we watched Kimmy and then D.J. walk across the stage with a couple hundred others, I thought about how much I'd teased Kimmy. Everyone told me I hadn't done anything worse than anybody else did. In fact, some kids in her class teased her much more than I had. Still, I felt badly that I'd gone overboard so much.

Part of that was Michelle's accident. Thankfully, she suffered no lasting effects, but she could have been seriously impaired. She was thankful I managed not to get too clingy myself when we went to camp at the end of July. I knew I'd likely drive her nuts with protectiveness. I'm so excitable; she could hardly even shower by herself.

Becky – Some of the Book Incidents in TV canon:

Michelle went into Steph's bed with nightmares a few times. Not recalling any of the week she had amnesia was freaky to her. Nightmares were few and far between, though – things like that Steph forget who she was, or want a different sister. Those things were totally unlike Steph.[393] The nightmares left for good by fall. Steph was clingy for a while, as she was worried about Michelle, but that problem was gone fast, too.

Steph and Michelle still had a few disagreements, like D.J. and Steph had. After she got in Steph's stuff near her birthday Stephanie even moved out onto the couch a couple nights.[394] Michelle threw her a fun surprise birthday party then and they made up. That was the worst, though. They grew close very quickly, though, and never had the really major ones that D.J. and Steph had. They became best friends fast.

Michelle didn't like Stephanie's coddling of her right after her accident all the time, but in a way, she did enjoy the fact that Stephanie was paying so much attention to her. This attitude surfaced one other time, too. She soaked in attention a bit too much after twisting her ankle before a tap dancing competition in November.[395] After she snuck out for the competition, Danny called Denise's and learned her mom took them there. Michelle was grounded for a week. We really put her to work helping with the twins while she was grounded.

Michelle was in tap dancing till she was a teenager, as were Teddy and Denise.

This was her last problem sneaking around at all. She never would have snuck off alone. D.J. and Dad had long talks about wandering, anyway. D.J. didn't remind her of when she'd mentioned spanking. However, she was concerned, because there were parts of Jesse that still lingered with Michelle.

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[393] "Substitute Sister" is not canon even for TV – and way out of character for Book Stephanie (she way overreacts and should suspect Rachel of mischief since she knows her). Danny doesn't intervene (any adult in the house would), and Michelle's new classmate never appears again. It can be a post-amnesia dream easily, readers don't see her awaken. More plausible she has such a bad dream in the TVU.

[394] "The Wish I Wish I Never Wished" – Sisters closer and not enough room in Book Universe, so this is TV canon, though possibly a Book Universe dream. This is the only book where Michelle is said to sneak looks at Steph's diary. A dispute with room rules in "Ten Ways To Wreck A Date" is the Book Universe version of this situation, as they don't get as carried away and it's earlier in time.

[395] "Tap Dance Trouble," More like TV Michelle to be ignored & upset about it, sneak out to dance at end. She says Steph rarely does anything for her without being asked; even in non-Sisters ones Steph does stuff for her on her own. It can be Gia who enters and gobbles breakfast, as there isn't enough interaction to know the girl has to be Darcy, so it can easily be figured to be Gia.

See, earlier that fall, Michelle tried to dye her hair – with messy results – and said she had a guitar and played in a band, among other things, to impress this "cool" new girl. Worse, she'd put a fake nose ring in her nose.

That didn't go as bad as it could have. She realized herself her true friends, like Teddy and Denise, care about her even if others think she's more "nice" then "cool."[396] And, the fact she realized on her own was a great encouragement. Even with sneaking out, Michelle knew she should be grounded like she was.

Still, D.J. decided she'd better have a talk after the tap-dancing thing. She reminded her she'd always catch her. Michelle agreed to tell D.J. or Stephanie about everything, and D.J. made her a promise like she made Steph for that make-out party. In return, D.J. made sure Michelle wouldn't go any further – and simply implied if things got too bad, D.J. would get "quite tough" on such behavior.

Michelle listened. She'd never dare do any bad stuff. She knew D.J. would get on her case really fast, and not only wanted to avoid the major long-term problems she could get into, like kids back on the farm, she still had a little bit in the back of her mind that D.J. could enforce some serious short-term consequences, too.

Jesse - Sat., July 29 - Retirement:

I gazed fondly at the stage from the backstage part of the Smash Club. "Are the video cameras ready?"

"Are you kidding? Danny's got himself, Joey, and me all recording this," Becky said. She noticed the glint in my eye. "Sure you want to retire?"

"No, but if I don't now, you'll be wheeling me out to sing when I'm ninety and gasping for breath between each note." I looked lovingly at her, and we stood closely, gazing into each others' eyes. "You're right, Becky. I'm just like an athlete who doesn't know when to quit. But, tonight's the night. Viper's gonna run the Monkey Puppets from now on, and I'm sticking to the Smash Club and the radio show. And, of course, my wonderful family." As we kissed, I uttered my familiar "have mercy."

Michelle, Nicky, and Alex ran in to see us. "The Rippers are here, Daddy," we heard. I turned around in shock.

"What? The Rippers?" I glanced out the door and saw my old band, the one that had let me go last summer. "Guys, I don't believe it."

"We don't either. We figured you'd either last a month tops and not be able to make a band, or try to play till you were a hundred," my old drummer joked.

"I-I mean I'm amazed you'd show up, after you started to get so big. This is great." I was really choked up, but not enough to avoid asking, "Who called you?"

"Michelle. She found one of our old numbers from when we'd come to your house all the time. After that we did hear about you doing a farewell performance from where you played a few weeks ago. She's the one who really convinced us, though."

I was incredibly excited. She was such a great niece; she'd really learned to help people. I never would have dreamed of asking them. "You guys are the best. Of course, it makes sense; it takes special guys to come to a fellow's house and entertain his little nieces while they practice. Man, this is something." I almost hugged them all.

I probably shouldn't have inquired, especially since Viper was right there, but I was still a bit foolish about such things. I still wanted the same great feel of the band I'd

[396] "How to Be Cool" – a book fitting TV Michelle much better, with different friends

had one hit with - “Forever,” which the Beatles let us record. Plus, I was feeling very sentimental, and yet quite bold now that the Rippers were here. “Care to join us?”

“They haven’t rehearsed with us once!” Viper exclaimed. “We’re almost on.”

“Do you guys know Forever?’” Barry inquired. He was the Rippers’ new lead.

They agreed. “Yeah, I’ve played it with the Monkey Puppets a few times.”

“How about we join you for that at the end?” The others agreed with Barry.

Becky was right. The only reason I’d formed the new band at all was because I hadn’t gone out on my own terms, just like with lots of other things where I hadn‘t liked the situation. I didn‘t accept others’ terms for me very well, but at least I was maturing a little spiritually, if only very slowly at times.

We’d done shows at different places in the area, though I really started to know it was time after our last road trip. I had announced tonight as my farewell performance, and invited people to come see me with the Monkey Puppets one final time.

Of course, I’d perform anywhere later if it was for family or something. But, I was too busy for show business. And, unlike Joey’s comedy, music was something where I had to put a lot more time into it than I had available.

I hadn’t become really big, but I’d done lots of cool stuff, simply because I persevered. In my own way, I was a lot like my dad.

He finally had the sense not to ask if I wanted to go back into the family business. He knew with the Smash Club and my radio job, I didn’t need or want that. He and Mom really enjoyed that night.

As a matter of fact, a lot of friends and even some teachers were there. Several, including Mr. Pearson, came up to congratulate me. At intermission, I gave a retirement speech, something along the lines of what I‘d prepared for my graduation. I went over the great accomplishments I’d had, my love of music, and how I’d always be available for little things here and there. I spoke of my wonderful family - unable to say much about Pam, as that started to really choke me up - and how they’d supported me through everything. I discussed the club, and what my future might hold. I was rambling as badly as Danny can sometimes, but I think everyone understood.

Then, just before the final number, I said, “This last number is special. There’s some special friends I’d like you to meet. Come on up, guys.” The Rippers ran up and joined me on stage. We spent a moment finalizing who would stand where to sing and play. Then, I said, “To all of you fans out there…to everyone who ever supported me, loved me, or maybe just clapped…and especially to my great family. This one’s for you.”

We performed “Forever” - my last number as a touring professional.

I wiped tears from my eyes, unable to hold it in any longer, not wanting anyone to see me like that, but unable to avoid it. I kept thinking of everyone, especially Pam, and all the love we shared.

I remained on stage as the applause died down and the rest of the bands left. My emotions were incredibly mixed, as I considered my great successes, and contemplated an uncertain future.

Nicky and Alex raced up to see me, with Becky following. I took one prolonged look at the audience, gazing thankfully at them for moments that seemed like the eternity I’d wanted my career to last. I contemplated how athletes had trouble when the cheering stopped at times. I was grateful I knew where I would end up in eternity, and that I knew how to build treasures up there. I’d blown a lot of chances, but at least I’d built some.

Finally able to accept that there would be no more applause, no more tours, and that life could still be good, I took my mind off that. With a sigh and a smile, I picked up my boys. Becky put her arm around me, and we walked off the stage together.

I didn't look back. I didn't want anyone to see me shed any more tears, which I surely would have if I'd eyed that stage any more that night. I was a family man now.

After the performance, Viper asked about D.J.. He recognized why things hadn't worked out between them - he was still too caught up in his own fantasies. However, he was also only twenty. And, he said something that really touched my heart.

"Man," he stated earnestly, "I got some big show business dreams. But, I also hope I'm where you're at as far as family goes in ten years."

Somehow, I knew he would be.

Stephanie – Fri. Aug. 11 – Fun times at camp and Steph's new boyfriend:

I'll admit, I finally understood why Dad was always so protective. I did get better as camp went on, but I still wouldn't let Michelle near the top bunk.

The camp Lisa invited Michelle to once she could do sports again was great. Most importantly, Michelle trusted Christ as her Savior there; she wasn't sure she'd understood totally when she prayed over Christmas when she was seven. As we sat around the bonfire this evening, we discussed life, and hope, and so on. And, Michelle seemed to really grasp that His death and resurrection was for her, personally, because of the bad things she did, or said, or thought. I met someone neat, too.

Caleb was a junior counselor there. He asked permission to court me when Dad picked us up from camp. Dad nearly fainted. He never expected anything like that, but he was super excited about the relationship. It didn't go nearly as fast as I wanted, but he was a nice boy, and we'd remain good friends even afterward.

Caleb was home schooled, and would be till he went to college, a year ahead of me. We wound up courting for over three years. The relationship taught me a lot about patience, and even helped Gia a little. After all, if I wasn't even kissing a guy till after six months, Gia had to ponder how she might not need to go so fast or go any further.

Joey - Sat., Aug. 19 – Danny's breakup with Claire, Joey meets someone:

Gia's mom had self-esteem issues herself. She hadn't been sure how to deal with Gia when she was out of control. Part of that, of course, had been the divorce and all the bickering that went on before then, and some of the things her ex would say. That was just what I tried to avoid in looking for love; I didn't want someone who'd been through so much turmoil. I wanted someone who led a peaceful life.

Things never developed between Michelle's teacher and me. However, I met a very nice nurse today. I was entertainment for her son Justin's eighth birthday party.

Her name was Suzie. Another nurse had told me about her while Michelle was recovering. I'd liked the first one, but she'd just come off a bad relationship and wasn't interested in dating. She'd gone to school with Suzie, though.

Suzie's husband had died of a fast moving cancer early this year, leaving Justin and his nearly three-year-old sister, Wendy. Suzie was still mourning, but at least I knew how to help there. Suzie's friend hadn't enjoyed my jokes and impressions. But, she'd figured I could cheer Suzie up a little, and might hit it off with the kids, too.

We had a long talk over dinner this evening, the day after the party. I was anxious

to get into a relationship, so waiting on this one to grow would be frustrating. But, I wasn't as restless as I would have been a few years ago. Not focusing on women much over the last year had taught me to have patience.

Danny:

Jesse really had changed. His tour with the Monkey Puppets had shown him how different he was late last year, but he still kept clinging to his dream. I was proud of him for finally knowing when it was time to quit.

Claire and I decided today would be our last date. We didn't get along as well as we'd hoped. Gia's messy room wasn't the only concern, but I still needed things tidier around me. I hadn't gone nuts like with Steph's dance teacher, though. Not once while Claire and I kissed did I ever try to fold socks. However, I realized I'd have real problems with Gia rebelling, as Steph was just now getting her to really settle down.

It was okay, though. Like with the one I'd gone with a few times after I broke up with Vicki, we'd had fun together, but that was it. I told Gia things don't always work out like you want them to; if they did, the Giants would be in the World Series a lot more often, and Jesse and the Rippers would have become the Beach Boys.

Stephanie:

Gia was a little perturbed. She found it hard to understand how some relationships could be so perfect, while others didn't work. I wouldn't say that Dad dating her mom made her take a step back in her progress. However, it confused her. I think she needed to see a surer and steadier relationship.

My old dance teacher, Karen, had one. I had another instructor since I was older, but we kept in touch. She and her husband had just adopted; she started the process with home visits and the like as an established, single woman, soon before her marriage. She was tidier, though never big on cleaning; still, that was her only weakness.

She and her husband had married a couple years ago. They adopted a girl named Sam, a ward of the court. I wished I'd had the chance to help. Ironically, there were a couple rich tycoons courting the woman who would be Sam's birth mother. She married one in another city. I often wondered - what if she'd married the one in our school district, who had no children. Maybe I would have caught her in time.

As it was, they surrounded her with an incredible amount of love and affection. Sam would turn out okay, though not as well as she could have, given her troubled past. Sam had been caught vandalizing our park with a gang of older kids.[397] The fact Karen and her husband loved her and continued the process despite this really helped Sam. She needed constant care, though she did become a professional ballerina.

Kimmy – Mon., Aug. 28 – First Time Not Going to School with D.J.:

I knew D.J. was going to be living at home, but also knew she'd be a lot busier. I ran into D.J.'s room saying, "I'm gonna miss you" and hugging her. D.J. tried to insist that we could still study together, and we did – I just had to quiz her on stuff.[398] I finally

[397] "D.J.'s Choice," see the Book Universe parts for what happens to Sam in that universe

[398] A couple books do say they "study together" while in college, but this is clearly what would be meant, as none take place in the time frame when Kimmy would be done with community college and into California U., the latest would be near the end of her community college time..

realized that we could still share good times together.

I could help, too, like with Michelle playing soccer. She decided she didn't want to be like her uncle anymore – she wanted to be like D.J.. She wanted to be the best, and was going to really dedicate herself to soccer. They didn't head the ball at that age yet, but a helmet would still be good for other falls she might have, or collisions with other players. So, her dad got a waiver so she could wear one.

I brought an old football helmet, and told her to just be careful not to scuff it where Garth had gotten Steve Young's autograph. As it turned out, she was getting a special type of helmet, not a football one. But, I tried.

Jesse – No More Concussions; Being Like D.J., not Jesse:

The second concussion can be a lot worse if you've had one before. Their coach was very good about taking players out the second it looked like they got dinged, but the helmet would help, too. Thankfully, Michelle never got another hit to the head.

I must admit, though, I was a bit sad about her not wanting to be like me as much. Yeah, her wandering onto the trail was just like I'd have done. I felt bad when she said another reason she didn't want to be like me anymore. She hated getting in trouble.

In a way, it was a good move for her to want to try to take after D.J. instead, but old habits were hard to break, and she'd still be a bit like me this year.

Still, D.J. and I sat down and talked with her, and we helped her remember how many good things I'd done, too; I'd had some really good advice at times. Sure, my thoughts on rules weren't the best, but we just wanted to make sure she didn't throw away the good things. She was satisfied at the end that she'd always be my munchkin, and that that was okay. She could follow D.J. if she wanted, because D.J. had really been a big help to her. Soon, she'd be a big help to lots more people.

D.J. - Sept. 5 – College's extra activities:

The college newspaper room looked like a professional city newspaper's. That wasn't the best part, though. There were so many chances to help others. Volunteering was a huge part of our school's culture, though I never stayed on campus. [399] Today was the first meeting of a group I helped with that worked with kids who had been in trouble with the law at a young age, so they wouldn't end up in worse trouble later.

I ended up helping this Sam girl a fair amount, though Karen, her adoptive mom, did most of the work. She was in another district. Michelle even assisted her in things like ballet. Sam had trouble, as a lot of damage had been done from emotional neglect when she was little. Only years later would she be a success. Still, Michelle found plenty of kids to assist me with from time to time all four years I was in college.

I had been quite anxious. In a way, I might have even worried that I'd be unable to go to college at all. Not knowing how happily things could turn out, especially with Mom having died, I might have been scared Dad would never take charge, and I'd be stuck raising Michelle myself, with no help from him.

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[399] Book, "The Story On Older Boys," lending more credence to D.J. going to San Francisco State in books, as it's renowned for all areas of journalism, as does their getting there in minutes, which happens in such a great majority of books, any implying she stays on campus can't be canon. While it's now shown that she goes to California University, which is just as close, in NetU and thus TVU, the schools are similar, and with some books being TVU, D.J. just makes a different decision in books because of changes stemming from her being proactive from the start. You'll see a likely answer in the BU part.

Instead, things had worked out wonderfully. Michelle could now be a tremendous friend and asset in my work. I still had to take it slow with her helping, but she was slowly becoming able to be a great benefit in my work helping troubled kids feel better about themselves and stay out of trouble.

Gia – The Great Change:

With my self esteem problems, I would have longed to simply have the problems D.J. had when I first met Stephanie. However, a lot had changed about me.

I'd learned to love her attitude of wanting to do good so much. I'd started down that path even before Michelle's accident, though I didn't understand it, and fought it in some ways until then. My own accident woke me up, too. I could have been seriously hurt joyriding; I was lucky I only spent a night in the hospital. I'd had time to think about a lot of what Stephanie said then.

The difficulty for me became understanding when to stop following my desires. I knew I was on the wrong path, but didn't know what the right path was.

By this time, I knew the right path involved always thinking of others. I was in things like S.A.D.D. now because I wanted to do good.

The shocking thing, as I look back, was how I slowly became the kind of do-gooder I'd teased so much before, especially when I trusted Jesus as my personal Savior around this time. Being around Stephanie made it fun. I began to love doing good things.

Danny – Oct. 1:

Michelle's growth was just as encouraging as Gia's. This school year was the last of any wildness; she'd settled tremendously from a few years earlier.

Michelle started to know when she was going too far right away, and admitted she deserved to be punished, even if it was by me. She realized the rules were there to help her. It wasn't just D.J. getting tough; it was all of us working together.

I had finally let her wear a leather outfit if she wanted, but she decided on her own she didn't want that kind of look anymore.

It had worked out even with my depression and resulting laxness. She hardly complained when I sent her to her room till D.J. and Stephanie confessed it was them, not Michelle, hiding the turkey on the farm we visited for Thanksgiving this year.[400] Michelle had tried to save it. She was showing her sensitive, tender side more, now that she saw even more the need to talk things out.

She really enjoyed soccer. She would do more than make it to an all-star game this year; she'd get selected for the traveling team after the season.[401]

Stephanie – Fri., Oct. 6 – Gia having fun with Michelle:

As Michelle was getting involved in more activities, I'd rediscovered the joy of a church youth group, and managed to get Michelle to join us most of the time; I could always say, "Hey, this is just what you wanted me to do a lot last school year." Michelle bugged Gia to come more bluntly than I had, but I asked, too.

The high school's homecoming game was tonight, and afterward, the youth

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[400] "The Great Turkey Escape," more like TV, no room in book universe with her as President.

[401] Book, "My Almost Perfect Plan," she likely just makes an all-star game in books, because she'd be way too overscheduled otherwise.

department had a slumber party and game night at a local center where we could play basketball, miniature golf, and so on. At 11 PM, they had a devotional.

Michelle was the youngest kid there, but she still stayed up past midnight. Dad came to get her about 1 AM, when she finally got tired.

Gia had a great time; and, she prayed to receive Christ as Savior during the devotional. She was so excited; Michelle was, too.

She'd had fun even before, though. I was excited as I looked over a few times early that evening, and saw her and Michelle playing air hockey and a few other things. Gia told me later, "Little sisters sure can be fun." She's right.

That was a sign that her heart was ready. She finally realized, the last few weeks, why her selfish way was the wrong way, and the penalty was for that wrong way – a penalty that had been paid in full for her when Christ died on the cross, and rose again. A victory that could never be taken away from her, as it was all His work.

Like Uncle Jesse, she'd struggle because of her old habits, but she had ultimate victory over the problems of the past. We were so excited, we could hardly stand it.

Steve - Fri. Nov. 3 – The Fate of Katsopolis Exterminating:

My last Friday class was over at noon, so I drove up to see D.J.. We had a great afternoon. We'd talked on the phone a lot, and by e-mail - Mr. Tanner finally gave in in September and got D.J. an e-mail account. He also gave her sisters one to share. Michelle accepted her limits well. Having D.J. there her first year was important, though, just in case she thought about trying anything wrong, because she was tempted a bit.

D.J. and I found each other's families, interests, and so on quite appealing; stuff we'd discussed little earlier. Still, I had trouble in school because I was looking for work. D.J. said her grandpa had been trying to rebuild his extermination business, but his heart problems in recent years really hindered him. So, I opted to give him a call. I'd been at a trade school, so I could easily just wind up in business with him.

The following Saturday, I went out and worked with him. I enjoyed it.

Michelle - Sat. Nov. 11:

We had my party today because everyone could make it easiest. D.J.'s school had off Friday for Veterans' Day Sunday, but ours had off Monday. Uncle Jesse and Joey had offered to do a special radio show saluting veterans. We had fun. Kimmy showed up, too. She'd been fired again, but did okay in community college. Studying would be a lot tougher for her. But, she and D.J. were still friends.

Kimmy – E-mail, staying friends:

I had my own e-mail account by this time, too. I was starting to learn to counter my problem, but I still acted dumb, and always would about some things. I tried to treat message boards like chat rooms, for instance. Then D.J. explained the difference, and said I shouldn't post messages every five seconds asking, "Where is everybody?"

I'd been really concerned about whether D.J. and I would stay close, but computers made things easy. Or, rather, they were easy if you didn't accidentally e-mail personal foot odor remedies to everyone in your address book like I did once.

Joey – Joey's girlfriend:

Suzie and I had been friends, but hadn't had a real date till after Michelle's birthday party. I was beginning to prefer the slow, methodical way in which we were doing things, but part of me was a little irritated. I mean, what if this didn't work out, and I'd spent years going steady with someone for nothing?

Danny was right, though, I was playing an important part in their lives. They liked me. It was just going to take lots of time.

Danny:

We'd gotten Jesse married. I was sure we'd manage to do the same for Joey, too. Still, over Thanksgiving, Suzie told Joey it was going too fast. Being near the holidays for the first time, I understood. Suzie faced just what I had.

Okay, she put her kids in timeout and didn't clean incessantly. She'd been the mother, and the kids had both sets of grandparents to help. It wasn't like with Jesse and Joey at first. Plus, she'd been the primary caregiver, so she could easily handle the kids. She just started working day shifts so she'd be home for them a few months after he died, rather than evenings when her husband was home before he got sick

Becky - Sat., Dec. 9 – Michelle's Traveling Soccer Team:

Today, Michelle learned she'd made the All-Star team in soccer. This was quite different than a mere All-Star game. This was a team that would play in the spring.[402]

She was so excited. This was her only time to be on a traveling team. They'd play all-star teams from other parts of the region, and eventually be able to compete for a state or even national title in soccer. She was having fun being a kid.

Practices were sparse till after Christmas. Games began in late January. She was the last pick, so she'd have to work extra hard. So, she skipped sleep to practice. This wasn't real rebellion like before, just a good kid who still didn't really plan well. Jesse and the others had talked with her about the importance of working hard at things.

She saw it pay off here, and once she caught up on sleep, she got pretty good.

Joey - Dec. 20:

I kept reminding myself that Suzie didn't dump me. She'd just put herself in neutral. It was like I had the option of trying to find someone else for a while, but if I didn't, she'd still be there. We stayed friends, and talked, but that's it.

I was disappointed. The last time I'd had a regular girlfriend over Christmas was back in college. I used the time to increase my tours of comedy clubs, as I had some this fall, and even produced comedy shows of my own. However, even this didn't seem like enough to get me on Jay Leno.

Danny really helped, though. He kept encouraging me to take it slow, and wait on Suzie. I think he sensed that this was better than the college one.

It was a great opportunity. I just wondered when or if it would happen. Months later, though, Suzie and I spent a great Mother's Day at her place. She decided that night she felt secure dating seriously, and we resumed. Sharing a special time like that helped.

Stephanie loved seeing us together, but tried a little too hard to help me when we

[402] Book, "My Almost Perfect Plan," Michelle is overscheduled to have made this team in the books, an all-star game is much more likely there, and even having played soccer is tough on the schedule, but times we don't see her can be during games that fall, with winter and spring more crowded.

were apart. When Caleb's family was gone, she and Gia argued over a boy. Steph wasn't sure about courting. Still, they got back together fast, and Steph apologized to Caleb, who understood. Steph had only wanted to hang out with the boy, not date him.[403] She was a bit jealous of Gia - she was new at this courtship thing.

Steve – Dec. 25 – "The Natural" at Exterminating:

Jesse's dad said he'd found "The Natural" when he stopped by. Joey thought he'd seen Robert Redford, the guy who played that role in the movie. Nick meant my work with him in Katsopolis Exterminating.

I went all in on stuff and really focused hard when I had to, like any athlete. I didn't push as hard as I wcould – I had D.J. - so my grades weren't as good as they could have been if I'd pushed real hard in college. Science had been my best subject in high school, and my grades had improved in community college, so theoretically I could have even tried for medical school with intense efforts. Instread, I'd found something I loved, and not just because I could keep such critters out of my food. I had good physical ability and the science courses helped.

Jesse – Tues., Jan. 23, 1996 – Michelle's All-Star Team:

Michelle's first All-Star team was made up of kids from many backgrounds. Most of them had one thing in common – they'd played soccer forever.

Michelle had started to play soccer because she wanted a sport where she could just run around and have fun. When she shot the ball into her own net, it was kind of a wake up call to the fact she couldn't be just like me.[404]

Once she learned how to stay focused, she was good. She felt a bit intimidated, though, till she met a girl, Kelli, who was one of her best friends from soccer. Kelli scored a goal for her own team in one of her first games, too, though not her first.

It not only made Michelle more comfortable to know this, it made her feel less like copping an attitude, though she hadn't had much of one the last half year or so. She didn't feel like she had to pretend like she was somebody; she was special just the way she was, because everybody was going to mess up now and then.

Michelle – Playing Politics Only For a While:

I got another habit that wasn't nice from a few kids, but as we grew as a team I got over it fast. I was deciding who I liked based on whether they liked someone else.[405]

What stopped this was our coach. She was great at working with girls at our ages. She knew how cliques formed, and how to prevent them. She helped us learn to get along and think of others, especially on road trips. By April I was a lot better.[406]

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[403] "Two For One Christmas Fun" – They stop talking way too fast for lifelong friends (Darcy and Steph maybe). Steph didn't want to do anything more than hang out with the boy who was visiting, so it would be okay if she's courting & not close. Lack of freedom (from family) is what most upsets her. No mention of Smash Club, so one could argue it's not canon in either, but there is a club like it. Girls could not want to sound too excited, or it could be unimportant, like ages off by a year. Still, "Merry Christmas World" is best TVU Christmas one, and only background from this book is canon, and this only canon in NetU.

[404] "Wrong Way Tanner"

[405] Book, "The Big Fix-up Mix-up," clearly TV (and NetU) Michelle, she never does this in books. Book Michelle is the opposite, she likes everyone, even trying to like snobby Rachel after a while.

[406] Book, "April Fools," she again likes befriending everyone.

Stephanie - Feb. 14, 1996 – Working with Gia:

Gia and I made a good team, even helping Joey with girlfriends a bit before he and Suzie got serious and also trying to help D.J.. As noted, she'd learned to enjoy helpng our famiy, she was really grateful for us.

I'd managed to keep her out of quite a bit of trouble, though some by the skin of my teeth. As an example, Gia had met another boy over the summer who only liked her for her body. I prevented her from going too far, though, and finally convinced her to break it off; luckily, she was able to do so.

As members of S.A.D.D., we talked about such decisions throughout the year, and decided that maybe it was time to make the group about more than just drunken driving. That was important to combat, but I was one of a number of kids throughout the country who noticed a need for a change.

It would take a while. We certainly weren't the only ones involved. However, within a couple years, the group would change its name to Students Against Destructive Decisions, and have a much wider focus.

Gia couldn't have been prouder. She sensed that she could really make a positive impact on the world. I only realized later that part of Gia's unruliness stemmed from her feeling like she had no power or hope. Helping others really broadened her outlook.

D.J. – Volunteering, Helping Lots of People:

If I'd lived on campus my first couple years, I wouldn't have been quite as involved in helping Stephanie. It wasn't only because of her that Gia improved; after that joyriding incident, I knew I'd better help with Gia, also.

California University (Go Cubs) wasn't as big into volunteering as San Francisco State, whose motto was "Experience Teaches" – I'm sure I'd have gone there if I'd been proactive from the start - but it was still emphasized. I had lots; I'm sure I'd have gone there had I been more proactive fromt eh start. I never punished Gia like I had Michelle; I was more of an authority for Michelle, and ten years older. Of course, if we'd formed a bond from when she was young, grounding Gia or removing some privilege or making her do chores might have had a positive impact.

I did, however, co-ordinate with Steph and Claire to make sure Gia was where she should be and everything, and not with the wrong crowd. I gave lots of advice, too, sometimes in a less forceful way than Steph did, but that was to be expected. Steph could get very excited, just like Mom. Steph had been the one who got Gia to stop smoking and everything else the first year or so of their friendship.

Kirsten could have done a lot, too, of course. She'd done a great job as Gia's Big Sister in that program, and she and the guy who was now her husband would have spent more time with Gia guiding and directing her. It would have been a lot rougher for Gia. But, the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program really works wonders when kids are connected with the right pals. And, Kirsten was a good, mature fit for Gia.

Thankfully, Gia got connected with the best. I'm sure Steph would say, "Pin a rose on my nose" to that, but it's true.

Danny – Fri., Feb. 23 - Stephanie and sports, Mickey, etc.:

I was growing more and more comfortable with Gia. I even helped to coordinate

things to help watch her. Gia would have rebelled against my keeping too close of a tab on her, but this way, I wasn't forcing things.

One thing I wanted to see Steph doing was following sports; D.J. had totally lost sight of that, though part of that was my fault. She didn't have as much free time as she could have. But, with Steph…well, I went overboard. I would get the schedules for every sporting event at their school and tape them to the refrigerator. I kept dropping hints that I would drive them to games.

Steph and Gia confronted me today. "I just want you to have the fun you used to with sports. Besides," I told them, "everyone goes to football games, but those volleyball players got kind of lonely playing before half a dozen people."

Gia said, "You know, Steph, we'd be better off asking Michelle for advice. Your dad just has no idea what our lives are like."

"Yeah, really. Look, Dad, I know you always had fun at games. But…" She tried to think. "Well, I guess there really isn't a good reason not to go."

"Yeah, and there's guys at baseball games," Gia said, as if suddenly realizing it. "We could go to those; you can teach me the rules, and I can meet a boy there."

They went to games, but mostly in high school. However, Steph had joined the tennis club back in the fall, an effort by the school to get kids involved in clubs.

She'd hoped to team up with Mickey – Mickey was a year ahead, but the school went 6-9th now. However, they didn't do a lot with her; sports kept Mickey very busy.

Instead, Steph and this one girl played and won against Mickey and a snobby girl. Part of how was that Steph and Gia babysat Michelle, Nicky, and Alex, and Gia and the younger ones had a great time playing against Steph and her friend. It was one of those little ways Gia learned how great it was to work with kids.[407]

Jesse – Mar. 20:

The Smash Club was doing very well. I'd hired a very good person to run the day to day operations, and they had everything flowing smoothly.

This let me concentrate more on radio. My hope was to be a morning drive-time deejay; that's the dream of every disc jockey. I thought it was doable in a few years. But, then who would be home for the boys in the morning? Unless the rumors I started hearing about their TV show were true, of course.

Becky – Michelle Not Upset About Losing TV Job:

Michelle had tried for a job on our TV station, as we struggled with ideas to boost ratings. We were really struggling. So, they had this kids' thing, and she wanted to do part. She was beaten out by Nicky and Alex.

She was not upset with them at all. She understood they were only kids, and hadn't even been trying to win the spot. Her great attitude really encouraged us.[408]

Joey – Apr. 5 - Practical Jokes and Michelle's Caring Heart:[409]

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[407] Book "Doubles or Nothing," Steph's not in this club again, friends are interchangeable, so it goes well here. A line about D.J. "just getting" her own line can be discarded like wrong ages as not important to the plot. More room in TV Universe, too, with so many books

[408] Book, "The Problem With Pen Pals," pen pals are matched by computer, so she could well get the same one as in the book, but if not, she might still want to try for the TV spot. She sure does in NetU.

[409] Book, "April Fools"

Michelle had pulled a number of jokes on the family last year, but we were all used to her stuff by now. She decided to try some at school, but wound up hurting the feelings of a newcomer, who pulled a bunch on her. That was just an accident, and she felt really bad once that girl admitted it. She also apologized to her friend Jeff right away, even though he didn't even know she suspected he was the one pulling them on her.

This encouraged all of us. Her compassion for others had really shown; I would have done the same thing she did, both in getting overly excited and in apologizing and helping right away. In fact, at times I had when I was a kid.

We saw the Lord working in her heart now; she'd meant it for sure when she prayed for Christ's forgiveness at camp last summer.

Stephanie – Helping With Communication:

One other thing that helped was how we encouraged Michelle to talk. D.J. agreed that a visit or two with Dr. Steiner wasn't needed, but D.J. and she talked with one of the church ladies a couple times about how to develop communication skills, after that tap dancing incident last fall. She was better, but D.J. wanted to make sure. It helped, as did getting involved with the church's youth a little more.

We helped her and Denise keep making the right kinds of friends, though they each had good, well-behaved friends at school, too. They gravitated toward nicer kids for the most part. She certainly did after that incident with the fake nose ring, as we worked with her. Michelle also introduced a number of her soccer friends to Denise

Michelle and I were drawing a lot closer, but we had little problems. She, D.J., and I all talked with some people before the Good Friday service today, and Dad even joined us. It wasn't grief counseling, but maybe it helped him. He hadn't wanted to acknowledge he needed any help himself; he'd found it hard just accepting that he should take me to Dr. Steiner after the earthquake. However, this was an effort on D.J.'s part to help Michelle and all of us. So, he was willing to be involved in that.

Michelle and I had become really close since my birthday; this was more just to prevent any more problems. But, it did help. I think Dad secretly wished he'd talked about losing Mom like this long ago. He might have felt more comfortable.

Michelle – Apr. 20:

One of the biggest problems now was that I wanted to help and impress others a bit too much. This was in a good way, of course – but, especially with my friends urging me, it caused problems with this one girl I met at the beach.

You see, she was a movie star, only I didn't know if till we got home. She wasn't in kid movies, hers were PG-13. I was so excited to have met someone like that over spring break. I threw this elaborate party for her, but she got upset because all she wanted was to be treated like a normal person.[410]

We made up, thankfully, and remained good friends. What I did was probably what a lot of people would do in my situation. It's easy to get distracted by celebrity and not think about the person inside.

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[410] Book "My Best Friend Is A Movie Star" – TVU canon because of time, Steph may be on a school trip that spring, and experience with Samantha may help Michelle realize such a girl wouldn't want someone to go overboard. She meets the same friend the previous summer in NetU thanks to different schedules.

Danny – Mon., May 6, 1996 – Station, "Wake Up San Francisco" History and Future:

Today, rumors about the station were confirmed.

A little history is in order. "Wake Up, San Francisco" was modeled on a very popular show in Cleveland known as "Morning Exchange." That show had once run two hours, though with competition it was down to an hour, and would eventually be dropped in 2003. It was on a network station, of course, and we were independent. That meant that we could run more local programming since we weren't an affiliate. It also meant we'd better do a good job, though.

Some of our other local shows had bitten the dust lately. Mr. Egghead lasted a few years after Joey tried out for it before being cancelled, and our station picked up Bill Nye's show in syndication. Syndicated shows were much less expensive than producing one's own shows. Ranger Joe, the cartoon show Joey hosted till he was replaced by Jungle Jenny, was bounced a couple years ago, despite Jungle Jenny's wilder style between cartoons. It didn't appeal to kids as much as our executives had hoped.

I don't like change - I still missed the old Captain Kangaroo, and Stephanie barely remembered it, D.J. more so. But, our station needed to do something to keep up with the times. So, they elected to become linked with a network.

Becky – "Network"ing:

Which network our station would affiliate with remained a point of discussion for weeks. Danny and I pushed for one that wouldn't force us to air programming that children couldn't watch; we wanted everything possible to be family friendly, because families were important. We were both irritated with what was being shown at times for supposedly family programming. Unfortunately, that eliminated pretty much everyone.

Danny was way more frustrated than me, of course - but that's because Nicky and Alex still weren't very interested in television.

We finally decided to support the group that wanted to go with Warner Brothers, and we became a WB affiliate. It was a logical fit, and way better than a full day of infomercials. They were newer, but they showed good, quality programs.

We broke with them years later when they were really struggling, soon before they merged into the CW network. At that point, then, we went with the one-letter network – "I" - that had been Pax. They were much more independent and not as tied to Hollywood, but it was just a small entity in Florida at this time.

Michelle – Elizabeth, and horse jumping:

Elizabeth was a grade ahead of me. She was also a little over a year older. She had still been nervous last year after seeing me hurt, so she couldn't jump.

I was excited to try the horse jumping contest again last month.[411] Dad was only a little anxious, but neither he nor her mom were pressuring us. Well, her mom continued to boast about Elizabeth's lifesaving skills, but I think that was because she wanted something to brag about without putting any pressure on her to jump.

We'd gotten to know each other well, even though she went to a private school and lived in a richer neighborhood. However, she was still a little bothered by witnessing my fall from last year. She placed third, behind me and one other person.

She always did well at other competitions, though. In fact, years later on this day,

[411] Book "How to Hide A Horse" mentions she does it in the future, though ages make it likely next year

she became one of our youngest Olympic team members in that event. She competed in 2008 and beyond. She always said having to struggle to remain focused after my fall was what helped her succeed on a much tougher stage. Nothing was like having to come back to this event after having seen me laying on the ground the previous year.

I think her having won three years in a row before, starting at age six, had something to do with it, too. She had her own horse by age eleven. Dad might have given me one if I'd wanted. D.J. would have just so I didn't feel like she did, and so she could show some faith in me if I wanted to go on. I never really wanted my own horse, though. I was too busy with other things. If my kids really want one, though, we'll get one as a family. That's the best way to do it.

Danny – Sun, May 19 - Chaperoning to game, Steve pitching for Mets:

My nephew Steve Tanner was promoted to the majors as a September call-up last year. This year, with some others struggling, he got the call about a month ago.

He said he might be starting in today's doubleheader, in place of one of their prize rookies who was struggling. He called and asked how many tickets I'd need. Being the doting dad I am, I asked for a few dozen. Hey, I knew by now I didn't have to win Michelle's favor, but her traveling all-star soccer team was home for a game. Steph wasn't pitching that day – she'll have more on that. So, our whole family went.

It wasn't his first career start, he did that once last year. And, his knuckleball was still very much a work in progress. But, the '92 Stanford grad looked to be in the bigs to stay, though he'd get sent down to work on the knuckler some in the minors next year, when former catcher Rick Dempsey, by then a manager, would work with him on becoming mostly a full-time knuckleballer.

The traveling teams often played on Sunday; their game just happened to be in the morning for a change. They were done by 12:15, so because Cousin Steve left us tickets, it was easy to get in. We saw a good game in the first game of the doubleheader – the Mets won 1-0. Steve's game was a Giants win, but he'd been promised a chance. He got one this year, when the whole team had pitching struggles. Of course, what helped most was being able to spend all of 1998 in the majors and starting for a bad Tampa expansion team, when he could work even more on the knuckleball at the big league level.

D.J. – Helping prevent cliques:

As we said before, because Michelle took after Uncle Jesse, she also fell into the habit of liking or disliking some kids at school over others. And, their coach did a great job of quenching that kind of attitude before it got out of hand.

By now, Michelle was great at being friends again, and Gia was even enjoying keeping away from that kind of attitude. She came with Stephanie to the game, and had fun talking with the coach. Michelle's coach was a Christian, who understood that when games came on Sundays, that meant there wasn't much chance for spiritual growth. She didn't force it on anyone, but she did a wonderful job of encouraging and molding the faith of the girls who were interested in that.

She approached Gia like she would the girls on her team. She started talking about her own background, and they talked about life in general. She shared about how and why it was important to always consider others, and be nice to them no matter what; certainly not just because you can get something from them or because of who they might

be friends with. Of course, this was easier with the soccer team, where teamwork was vital. However, even with Gia, she was one of those people I was glad to see making a difference. Steph did a great job, but she couldn't do it alone.

It was rougher with Gia, of course. Unlike the soccer team's girls, Gia could still get a little upset if someone was going with someone she'd gone with, and things like that. Not much anymore, though. The coach said that was why she worked with the girls so much now, so they wouldn't get into those habits later.

Just her talking with Gia helped reinforce what we'd said. That stuff's all about feelings, and those change too much to base any relationship on; relationships have to based on things like trust, caring, and so on.

Stephanie – Sat., May 25 – State champion in baseball; Gia grateful:

I didn't like to give Dad lots of credit, but I have to a little. However, Michelle deserves the bulk of the credit for actually talking me onto the baseball team when a mild flu outbreak hit the club near playoff time. Hence, while Mickey would be on the state volleyball champions in high school, I got to be in the bullpen when we won the state title game down in Los Angeles for baseball. Given where people involved lived, it would have happened if the redistricting had gone the other way, too.

I was anxious being out there in the championship game; though not as much as Dad. Still, I changed in the ladies' locker room, and had a team mom with me at all times except on the field, so all was okay.

Dad went to college with the school's manager. He was always good about not letting the kids get too wild. That was good, because one of Michelle's friends had a small crush on a sixth grade pitcher. Once, trying to get her to talk to him, Michelle and she snuck on board our team bus and didn't get off till after it started. I yelled at her pretty good for that, but she let me know right away where they were, so we let the talk be enough. By this time, I was a capable sitter and could watch her well enough. I knew where she was at all times, and she'd made sure of that. Still, she wouldn't have even tried this if not for that small remnant of our Uncle Jesse in her.

Gia was really excited to see me on the team. I had a crush on the catcher, but Caleb and I were very close by this time. So, I introduced him to Gia. They went out for a few months, and remained friends. Little did she know I did this to help expose her to "safe" boys. She sort of figured it out after a while, though, and was very glad.

Becky – Sun., May 26 – Bands, Bad Lyrics, etc.:

Caleb, Gia, and Stephanie were in the younger girls' room. Caleb said, "I know you and Gia like some of these bands. But…have you heard some of their lyrics?"

"Who listens to lyrics?" Gia wanted to know. She still had some of the old Gia.

Danny came in with a dust rag. "Ah, music. Steph, did you tell Caleb about that birthday present I got you?" Before Stephanie could answer, Danny was recounting the visit from Tommy Page. "Steph had a huge crush on him; like other ten-year-olds might, she thought it might be love.[412] D.J. was so excited she forgot all the other limo rides she'd been on. She was worried her friends would laugh if they knew she had a big crush on Tommy Page, or even ever liked him, since she was fourteen."

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[412] "Crushed," Ramona's comments in NetU part explain D.J. getting bck at Steph a bit and even prodying her for Steph going wild over her celebrity crush, Joey McIntyre.

"Dad, I'm fourteen," Stephanie reminded him.

"True. But, you're months younger than she was."

Caleb read some of the lyrics; some were okay, but others talked about things that weren't nice to think about. "Stephanie, are you really happy with some of these CDs in your room? I know it isn't allowed at your uncle's club. He went with comedy because a lot of music nowadays talks too much about mean stuff, and lust, not love."

"Well…" She wasn't sure. "Gia, go get D.J., she went to that big concert with me last year." Gia left, and returned with D.J. and Kimmy entering behind her.

Steph hoped D.J. would support her, but also, she had a part of her that wanted someone else other than their dad to agree it was wrong; someone closer to her age.

"Deej," Steph said, "what did you think about the "Counting Crows" concert?" Steph had started to listen to some, and didn't like the message they were sending, yet it was hard for her to know how to express that with Gia around.[413]

"To be honest, I didn't like it like I thought I would," D.J. said. "It was cool because they were popular, but there was something about the lyrics…"

Gia shook her head. "Why do people listen to lyrics?"

"Even if you try not to listen, they get into your head." Caleb whistled several successive TV theme songs. Steph and Gia sang them right away; Gia was "embarrassed" to know so many. "That's the point. I know Stephanie's interests in music have gotten more conservative, as we've done more together. Although, I guess it's more getting back to where you were. It's important to watch what you put in your head."

"I agree. I never put anything in my head," Kimmy said.

"We know," Stephanie said dryly.

They talked further about music choices. The others – including Gia – agreed that they disliked them. Even Gia didn't want Michelle being influenced the wrong way. And, there were plenty of good things to listen to that were better. Jesse and I lamented the fact there were so few innocent, fun bands like the Beach Boys.

If D.J. had been more proactive, Steph might have had a very small stage of liking some conservative hip hop music, but that would be the only rebelling she'd do. As it was, she started to go back to a more conservative list of musical tastes, and found it a lot easier than she'd though it might be. The fact Gia was doing the same thing helped.

Jesse – Sat., June 1 – End of All-Star Season, Where Preschool Friends Were:

"Hey, I know you," one of Michelle's friends said at the team picnic.

I grinned; she was a little young to have seen me with my band, but that was still my first thought. "Oh, you heard my band play? Or did you hear my radio show?"

"You played my preschool graduation." I didn't know what to say to that. "Michelle and I just realized, we went to preschool together."

Michelle was standing next to her. "She was in the half day Kindergarten like most of my preschool friends."[414] Aaron was eventually moved into the full-day one, and remained in Michelle's class, but others stayed there and wound up in different classes;

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[413] Very few books mention her liking hip hop, let alone grunge, and these don't match her Book Universe personality. Any mention is therefore TV Universe, even if the rest of the book is book canon, and most that mention it are TV canton, with mild hip hop Book Universe early, like "Hip Hop Till You Drop," and she matures faster. It's a phase that lasts till high school in the TVU, then vanishes. Concert in "Leap of Faith," the conservative Tanners wouldn't like their lyrics much, as D.J. says here.

[414] This is why she worried she wouldn't know anyone, she was the only one going to full-day

Michelle had known none of the others would be in her Kindergarten class.

This girl had been on the traveling All-Stars from another team. “I remember you at the horse jumping contest, too,” Michelle said, introducing me to her friend. “It’s been lots of fun playing together,” she remarked to us.

I made some small talk. “Yeah, and the great part is, you got to play, munchkin. That’s what’s nice about soccer. And, you were good.” I turned to her friend. “Sure was great seein’ kids who knew how to play. ‘Course, you met her sister D.J.. Well, I coached D.J.’s friend Kimmy, she just ran every which way. I told Kimmy if you see the ball, kick it toward their net; she didn’t no nothin’ about strategy.”

“I was like that when I was five, too,” her friend said.

“Yeah, well, Kimmy was eleven,” I remarked.

D.J. – Lasting Friendships:

Michelle and her good friend Kelli sat on a park bench sipping lemonade. “I guess you’ll be on the elite team next year again,” she told Kelli.

The leagues were divided into elite and recreational soccer, and the players were also considered based on what their prospects were. Michelle had improved, but was still one of the worst players on the all-star team, while Kelli, ten, was one of the better ones. However, they’d because very close, as Kelli loved to work with girls like Michelle and take them under her wing, just as she did with her own sister.

“Yep. It really was fun traveling with you, Michelle.”

“Same here.” They reminisced for a while, and exchanged papers with addresses on them as I walked up to them. “I’ll miss you.” You could tell she’d really appreciated her company. We’d helped Michelle to aid others, but she still needed a few friends like Kelli herself at times, to erase that wilder bit of Jesse in her.

“Hey, you could be an All-Star next year, too,” Kelli said.

Michelle wasn’t too sure. “Maybe. I’ve got other fun things I want to do, though. Soccer is your life. Kind of like Elizabeth with horse jumping, huh, Deej?”

I sat on the other side of her from Kelli. “Right. You have the chance, if you would want to devote yourself like Kelli does, or like Elizabeth does horse jumping, but it’s good to have a variety of interests, too.” She would end up playng soccer in middle school and high school, the latter as a reserve. I encouraged her by saying, “You’ve really grown up this year. Being on this team has really helped. You got a taste of road trips like our Uncle Jesse used to do, and everyone’s loved being chaperones.” I wished I could have done more, but their season had ended in early May, just when my classes did. Still, I’d gotten to games, and of course to the team’s awards banquet.

“I’m glad we can be friends forever. We’ll visit each other, too,” Kelli promised. Michelle and Kelli had grown close enough for Michelle to share lots of thing about how she grew up; and how I’d had to react. It was great to see her with such good friends. Kelli joked about her mom kidding about me coming to keep her in line, but she was a good kid. Her uniform was always messy; but, that would have been Dad’s problem, not mine. Her sister was only a year younger, so she wasn’t old enough to be a real leader, but I’d helped both in rare times we talked to not argue so much.

As families slowly left, Michelle was sad this great season was over, but was much more willing to accept such endings. She knew all the friendships would last, and that was the important part. She had all sorts of friends from this.

Danny – Sun., June 23 - Father's Day, thankfulness, and ear piercing:

"Hardware stores were made for Father's Day," Michelle said. She'd gone with Becky and the twins to pick out things for Jesse and me.

"Aw, thanks, honey," I said once I opened their gift. I hugged and kissed her – she'd decided I could again after saying I couldn't for a few days a few years ago.[415] She had been trying too hard to be like Uncle Jesse. "I'm glad you decided to be a sweet, loving girl who shares her feelings instead of macho like some guys. Otherwise you'd get hardware instead of flowers for Mother's Day years from now."

"Me, too." She smiled warmly at D.J., glad D.J. always got through to her heart.

Jesse heaved a sigh, thinking about his wilder days. "You know, munchkin, I've gotta admit, I wasn't always the best role model those first few years. I'm glad you guys are there for my boys, and for me, to help me talk about my feelings more." He rested his head in Becky's chest. "To show me it's okay to be a little vulnerable, and not this macho tough guy who thinks he can get through anything with no problem." I could tell there was something in her that reminded him of Pam.

"I'll get it." Joey got up to get the door. Suzie and her kids came in. We sat and talked for a while as Justin, Wendy, Michelle, and the twins played in the back yard. "It sure is great having such a big family around," Joey said after a while.

Jesse couldn't help but think of his dad. "I'm glad my dad got to pass on the business to someone we know."

"I'm glad I have three of the most beautiful daughters anywhere."

I hadn't noticed Michelle standing next to me again. "By the way, Dad, I've been meaning to ask; can I get my ears pierced?"

I fretted slightly. "You know…,part of me wants to say 'yes,' just to force myself to let go, but part of me wants to say 'not till you're forty,' and part just wonders if I should ask D.J. her advice. I mean, I'm glad you asked me, Michelle…"

"First, Dad, if it's that fake nose ring I wore once, don't worry.[416] D.J. and I had a long talk about that after you and I did. It's like the leather outfit; I can't stand that stuff now. I don't want to look like that."

"Yeah, now D.J. watches just as a precaution," Stephanie asserted.

"You're right; I guess I've done a great job, huh?" I said happily. "You know, it concerned me at first, what Dr. Landress said. But, he said I was a great father, too, in letting you handle things till I was ready, huh, Deej?" Everyone agreed. "Tell you what. I'm so glad you asked me, I'll take you out to get them for your tenth birthday."

She loved the idea. I might have let D.J. do it if she'd been proactive, but now, Michelle was turning to me for things, which thrilled me.

"One thing, though, Michelle – we'll need to hold hands."

"Dad, that's embarrassing!"

"Oh, I don't mean for you; I'll need someone to hold mine," I jokingly confessed. We spent a good while enjoying the laughter together.

Joey:

Father's Day had been super. Suzie's husband had died over a year before, so it

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[415] "High Anxiety"

[416] "How To Be Cool"

wasn't as hard, but they still didn't really see me as a potential father yet. I was just a fun guy to be around. At this point, there was that danger of just letting things stay that way, like they had with other girls. However, I didn't think about that. I didn't want to be just like Jesse or anything. He and Danny had both been in a bit of a hurry to marry. But, I had had the best of things right where I was.

D.J. – A Few Things to Consider When Dating:

Joey could afford to wait; Suzie needed a guy who was willing to take it slow. Sometimes, after a year or two, if it's going nowhere you need to break it off, but when dealing with a recent widow, everything needs to be taken slowly. Yes, Dad proposed to Vicki after just over a year of knowing her, but he'd been alone for almost five years. They spent more time getting to know each other and found out it wouldn't work.

If you don't count the attempt at eloping, Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky did it about like most people their age who truly love each other. They went out for around eighteen months before the proposal, then took that engagement time slowly and had the wedding over two years after they met.

Steve and I were like them. We sensed it a little, but not totally. It was far different from our first time together, but this was still way too early, with us being in college. I heard a professor at the beginning say many people who marry meet that person in college, but that's at least four years you can know them. You need that time to learn everything about the other. That's what Steve and I were doing. We hadn't met there, but the time for us to really start talking about deep things and finding out everything about each other's likes, dislikes, etc. began the night of my senior prom.

Becky - June 24 – Caleb's Dad Helps Run Smash Club:

By now, Jesse had signed something giving me part ownership of the Smash Club, if only in name. He really didn't run lots of day to day stuff, anyway.

That caused problems, though. See, the fellow he'd hired to run the Smash Club gave his two-weeks notice today - he wanted to move someplace bigger. That made sense; Jesse knew picking a more inexperienced person might mean they'd move on later. I'd told him to check on that – though he insisted he didn't have to – and to his credit the fellow was honest about it last summer.

Steph had been going with Caleb for a few months. His dad was into Christian entertainment - not the soul-winning stuff, just wholesome entertainment with no booze, no raunchy stuff, just clean, family fun. He loved comedy; he'd heard Joey numerous times. He wanted to prove people could be drawn to watch clean comedy.

Caleb's dad would have filled out an application anyway, but he didn't have to - we knew him well enough. Jesse called him right away about the opening. So, Harold Wilson because the day-to-day operator of the Smash Club.

Jesse was a bit miffed that there'd be more emphasis on comedy. In his mind it would always be a rock and roll club. However, he also realized a divide was forming in society. He'd become much more of a family man, and he might not get any people for a music club unless it was far rougher than what he remembered back in the 1970s; he never played any major heavy metal, let alone what some were getting into with their lyrics; lyrics that we'd talked with the girls about avoiding, and they'd agreed.

Still, there would be some light rock, enough that Jesse hoped young people

would get an appreciation of what he grew up loving.

Mr. Wilson was a big Abbott and Costello fan. Steph had only heard of them before, but since Caleb and she began courting, she loved them. For one thing, even though we knew part of it wasn't her fault, now that Kimmy understood what she had, she could joke about it just as much as we could. And, we loved how everyone got so confused with "Who's On First" and other plays on words - especially Kimmy.

Had Jesse eventually sold the club and gone back to music, I'm pretty sure if he and some friends had gone in and bought it.

Jesse – July 13 – Talk between rebels at Smash Club; Gia coming around:

I walked over to where Steph and Gia were hanging out with a couple friends. "Pretty funny stuff, huh?" I said. "It ain't like I remember, but…it's pretty good."

After a second, Gia interrupted. "That's okay. I know you wish it was the Beach Boys or someone like that."

"Thanks. It won't be a total comedy club. We're still gonna do music. But, it will be music, not that…stuff some people listen to." I suddenly realized who I'd spoken to. "Sorry, Gia, you kinda like that, huh?"

"To tell you the truth, I like it less and less." She said she wanted to talk to me alone near the stage, and we excused ourselves. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure." I said with a shrug.

"A lot of what I felt, why I acted like I did…I didn't think I had a future. I didn't think it mattered. Now I do. Like with that catcher Stephanie introduced me to. Anyway, she said you were a lot like me. Did you ever have a change like that?"

"Yeah, of course. I felt so much better, like what I did mattered. I thought about dating and girls in a different way right away, after I trusted Christ. I thought about settling down, so I could have my own family. I really struggled, and messed up big time sometimes. But, it's like with the lyrics you guys talked about. I realized I had to be on guard for what I let come into my life, 'cause I was important to people." Revealing something like this, and helping someone, felt great.

She agreed. "For me, it was relationships. I saw right away Stephanie had what I wanted. I tried to go along, but there was so much of the old me, the one that acted like I did because I didn't think I had much hope. Now, just like with that boy Stephanie set me up with. Part of me was glad. I appreciated it in a way I don't think I would have before." She said she just wished she hadn't wasted so much time.

"I know it seems like you wasted it, at your age. But, I was in my mid-twenties. You got almost a ten year head start on living life the right way," I encouraged her. "You're young yet, the old you is still gonna come out; it still does with me," I said sadly. "But, I also know you're gonna have the chance to help a lot of people."

"Yeah. Although, I have to be honest. I'm starting to hate those raunchy lyrics. But, I still think I like the comedy here better than your music."

I told her that was fine; Joey had performed here plenty when he was younger. "I hate the fact people won't come out to hear good, clean music." That was as close as I ever came to admitting we had been having a dip in attendance because of that, before the change. "But, I'm sure glad we got kids like you coming. And, I'm even happier to see some of the choices you've been making the last few months."

As she went back to the table, I knew it was mostly Steph who had been the great

role model for her. But, I couldn't help but have a moment of pride as I considered how much I'd been able to influence Steph to help like that. I knew that Gia could do the same; and, I was glad it would be without all the bumps I'd had.

Michelle – Jul. 28 – Nicky & Alex's sometimes physical play:

One difference between boys and girls is that boys are sometimes much more physical in their play. That can be toned down with enough practice, and Nicky and Alex weren't as wild as some kids their age are. However, there could still be some problems with them wrestling, especially when we'd get into tickle wars.

I didn't mind those "tickle wars," obviously – I was that way myself, thanks to the Uncle Jesse influence. However, I had to scold them a little today, which I rarely did. Thankfully, they were old enough – almost five – by now that they weren't too upset. It was still effective and helpful, though.

See, we were running around chasing each other in the back yard, and Nicky – who was usually the wilder one – got Alex in a bit of a headlock. Those aren't usually dangerous with a child that age, of course, and Alex got out of it fast. But, then Alex just slapped Nicky in the head.

"Hold it, boys, time out," I declared, holding my hands like a "t."

"Michelle, you can't put us in timeout," Alex said. Then, he turned to his brough for support. "She can't do that, can she?"

"Alex, I know your dad likes the Three Stooges, but there was no reason to hit Nicky like that. You tell him you're sorry." He didn't want to – he said Uncle Jesse did it to Joey once or twice. "Now, Alex, or you'll take a real timeout!"

"But he was bad," Alex whined.

"We don't do that in this family. You picked up the idea from how your daddy and Joey play.[417] But they don't really hurt each other. And you hurt your brother."

"I'm sorry Nicky," he said sincerely, after which they hugged.

I was glad to be able to referee things a little. I was firm, yet loving. Just like D.J. had taught me, and, indeed, like Uncle Jesse would have been. I was finally starting to mature into a good, caring leader.

I might have been more upset if he'd smacked me, but they never did that. And, even that I would have forgiven very easily. They were just little kids.

Stephanie – Aug. 23 – Denise's maturing & future, the new PA, and Little Richard:

Denise was the new PA at Michelle's school, and Michelle considered running for class president, though she didn't. A girl named Mandy became president, after being so frustrated with this Rachel's presidency in fourth. Had Michelle been in that fourth grade class, and encouraged Mandy with how I was as PA, Mandy and Denise's roles would be reversed this year.[418] After all, Denise would still be a take charge kind, but with some attitude, more like a politician. Which was something she was interested in.

Denise fit the mold well of a strong-willed campaigner for what was right. She

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[417] In "It Was A dark and Stormy Night," he hits his bed and says "bad bed"

[418] Cassie and Mandy aren't Michelle's best friends, so don't urge her to run as in books, so snobby Rachel wins in fourth. Mandy is a caring but take charge kind. She didn't run in fourth, but would be sure to run and win in fifth in the TV Universe, after the class's bad experience with Rachel. Denise's attitude is molded by Steph and others into a more caring type. She's fifth grade president in the Book Universe, but here she's PA, being closer to Michelle, thus influenced more by Steph.

still remembered standing up for kids with the Rigby thing,[419] and wanted to do more to make the world better. And yet, like Bo McIntyre, Dad and Aunt Becky's guest who we mentioned earlier, she wanted to chart a moderate course. She'd be in city government and on the school board when she grew up, as would Teddy, and would be part of the reason things didn't go too far when it came to really liberal things.

As for now, Denise enjoyed being the PA. She was good at getting kids to behave. Thanks to Missy and me, she combined a "take charge" attitude with more compassion and humility than she might have had otherwise, since we sought to influence her quite a bit, just as we had with Michelle.

We had a party to celebrate her being named, and Little Richard showed up. He really enjoyed family at this point; one of twelve kids, he was actually her great-uncle, though of course few kids call someone "Great Uncle so-and-so." Maybe Derek would, I guess. Denise's mother was his niece. He was a great encouragement, and joked that she better hope there were no kids like our Uncle Jesse or him there; Little Richard used to scream hymns in church.

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2. Cute Couples - Sept. 1996-Nov. 1999

Michelle - Sept. 16, 1996 – First boyfriend:

I'd played with Jeff Farrington off and on at recess. He loved jokes. Last year, his parents contemplated divorce, and he struggled in math because of that, even cheating off me once when our classes were combined. He confessed right away. Thankfully, they got counseling and reconciled. But, he'd had to keep his younger siblings in line back then, and it was rough. He was glad to have me to talk to about that.[420]

As we talked more, I discovered there was a sensitive side to him, too, like my Uncle Jesse. Jeff just hid it with jokes and silly stuff till I couldn't stand it at times. However, over the last year, I'd realized I might like him a little.

Here's what clinched it. Jeff invited me to do "Who On First" with him in a school talent show. I was delighted, till I learned he was playing the guy who knows what he's doing; he knew the player names. I was the person who couldn't figure out Who was on first, What was on second, and so on. I was uncomfortable sounding so dumb; it just wasn't me. I'd been hit in the face with a pie at the end of a comedy skating show last January,[421] but that wasn't actively playing dumb like this would be.

So, after school today, we were practicing at my house. Aunt Becky could tell something bothered me. I told her, and right away, Jeff piped up that he'd switch parts. He was willing to sound all goofy for me. I felt so special.

He had a little crush on me, too. He wouldn't admit it till now, but he'd had it since he first put a fake spider in my lunch box years earlier to see me laugh.

Kimmy – Not working, at least learning business:

I took business courses in community college, and hoped to join D.J. at California

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[419] "Day of the Rhino"

[420] The books' Jeff is in another class in the TV Universe. Michelle is in the same school, & there are at least 2 classes per grade ("The Long Goodbye," 3 in "Spellbound" and the book "If I Were President.")

[421] Joey would do the show like in the book "The Penguin Skates," but Michelle would not give her part away before knowing what was to happen in it like in the book.

Unviersity next year. I like the idea of a profession where I could gossip with people all I wanted like beauty, and I was into fashion. I wasn't in fashion, but at least it interested me. I didn't have to work really hard, unless I had some kid with gum in his hair. On the other hand, customers like that would be balanced out by the mostly bald guys who had five hairs on their heads and wanted each one trimmed just a little.

I made a few friends trying that out – being labeled might have caused problems earlier but not now – but I also made mistakes like dying peoples' hair weird colors because I accidentally put… you don't want to know. Anyway, I was let go there, and they suggested maybe parties were my thing; you know, the design stuff. Why blab about who's going to whose party when you can be the party?

Duane wasn't doing badly as a plumber, but he didn't say a lot inm public, though I'd helped him to open up a little. Now, he might answer a question with something other than "whatever" - like "maybe."

He had me, so he seemed satisfied with where he was, not trying too hard. I had never met another guy who tooked at me seriously. Duane always did. We double-dated with D.J. and Steve a lot, and D.J. urged him to excel, too, just like she did me.

Danny – Show not cancelled:

I learned today we'd still have our half hour morning show for another few years. We'd gone from an hour show to a half hour just as Morning Exchange had cut its time. We'd also changed time slots several times. We wouldn't have to make a decision for a while on who would be home in the mornings to make sure the kids got off to school. The older girls could, but, I still preferred it to be Jesse, Joey, or one of us.

That could wait, though. Right now, each of the girls had met a really nice boy, and Joey and Suzie were another cute couple. The coming months and years excited me.

Joey – Sat., Sept. 20 – Talking about diaries with girls, and truce called:

Michelle had had a diary for a little over a year. Steph was tempted to peek a time or two to bug Michelle, but never did. I'd tried to convince her not to look in D.J.'s, to no avail, a few times. Now that Michelle and Jeff liked each other, I asked if Nicky and Alex would start peeking. "I could never convince you girls to stay out of each others," I said. I wasn't admitting defeat; I just hoped Michelle wouldn't look in Stephanie's. So, I tried to help her think of how she'd feel. "They'll look in yours now, huh?" I asked her.

"No. Boys don't usually do that." I admitted that was true. "Unless they really want to bug their sisters. But, I didn't look in Steph's, as much as D.J.'s. Of course, she told me she taught me how to look in D.J.'s so I wouldn't look in hers."[422]

"That makes sense," I admitted.

"We called a truce, though. Just in case Steph would show Nicky and Alex where I put mine." We laughed for a moment. "Plus, it isn't as much fun for me to sneak into it. Espeically with us talking so much since my accident."

"I'm glad you're finally respecting each other's stuff. I'm surprised them talking with you helps; D.J. says giving Steph her school paper never did."[423] I guessed that, "It

[422] Book "The Wish I Wish I Never Wished" - TV Universe since it's the only one to mention it - implies she "often" did, but it still wasn't as much as they did D.J.'s. She probably did some in the 99% of the time we don't see them. However, what Stephanie tells her here is also likely true.

[423] "A Pinch for a Pinch" – Steph says they're kids she doesn't know at a school she doesn't go to

wasn't the lifestyle she wanted to know about. It was just her sister, huh?." She agreed. Now, tell me the truth. Isn't it a lot nicer to respect each others' privacy?"

"Yeah. It is." It was nice to see were were having an effect, even if it took a while. And, that Steph had also stopped looking in D.J.'s diary. Although, the important thing was that they were talking and sharing things so much more in the last year.

It might have started years earlier if D.J. had been proactive; someone who had known Pam and could help with things more. But, at least we were finally there.

Stephanie – All nicer to Kimmy, almost all was teasing in good fun:

Michelle had never hated Gia, of course, as we've said. The teasing was even less than it had been between Kimmy and I. But, even that died down with Gia on the right road, and helping with Michelle more this past year.

Kimmy was rather rude to Dad and the others at times. But, mostly, we all just teased Kimmy in good fun, and she teased back in good fun, not trying to hurt anyone. Because of her family and being teased in school, she'd grown to want people to tease her to show they liked her; some people are like that.

If she'd been proactive as a mother figure, D.J. would have set limits and made sure we teased very little, teaching all of us to respect each other more. As it was, sure, Kimmy teased Dad after he and Vicki broke up, but she never would have dared do that if she didn't think he could handle it, and D.J. made sure I wasn't hurt by it the rare times Kimmy went too far.[424] Kimmy always was good about certain limits, like anything about Mom was off limits for all of us. She never made jokes about Mom, or us missing her, or how D.J. had to discipline.

By now, we were sharing our feelings a lot more and the teasing was less, though we still joked some. Kimmy told as many at her own expense by now as anything.

D.J. Fri., Sept. 26, 1996 – Changing Majors:

I didn't enjoy broadcast journalism as much as I'd hoped. As mentioned, I didn't like attack journalism. Nobody in my family believed in such destructive things, and they all did well. Vicki hadn't liked it, either, but she was old enough she hadn't been drawn into that at first. I could have carved out a niche as a sensible, responsible journalist, but with the decline in local programming, it would have taken years before I could have become a talk show host, and even then I wasn't sure; lots of competition meant lots of struggles for ratings. Aunt Becky got her first position right out of college, but she was near the top of her class in a smaller market.

Don't get me wrong, it was a great school. I never felt I had to be too aggressive. It just wasn't as easy to get ahead by being nice as it should be.

Print journalism was more enticing. I'd likely minor in it, as I'd worked on school papers for a long time. There would always be readers who enjoyed someone who wasn't just out to make a name, and I could freelance once I got married.

However, my other reason for choosing California U. came into play. They were

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[424] "Honey, I Broke the House," D.J. looks at Steph once, like she's concerned Steph might be hurt, but she isn't, and jokes right back. Such insults wouldn't happen in books. No books show them teasing, so a few light things would occur, but no insults, and stopping after 1-2 light comments, never pushing. Kimmy leaves at just a look when D.J. and Stephanie need to talk ("Slumber Party") and always seems to leave that alone. Yet, she tends overall to accept and dish out lots of teasing while sensing that boundary in TVU, like the time mentioned where she teases Danny about Vicki in "Is It True About Stephanie."

strong in nursing, so I could devote myself more fully to people, Instead of just investigating, I could help on a personal level. – it also had a good veterinary school which could have been my focus had things been different.

I could always keep taking courses once I started a family, so I could keep up with the times. I could work a day or so a week someplace. The nursing shortage meant it was a good job - the field would bran very short in a few years in some areas.

Steve:

Working with Jesse's dad was lots of fun. He looked older than his middle fifties. There was a lot of stress in his life, and some of the things he told me about Greece during the war were interesting yet chilling. I only wish I'd gotten to know Papouli; he seemed like a really wonderful man.

I was excited to see D.J. make her decision to go into nursing. It would mean she'd be even busier at times with schoolwork, but we were learning how to be patient, rather than infatuated. We were really growing closer.

As kids that age often do, Nicky and Alex asked if we were going to get married. Somehow, it didn't sound all that unusual, though it was still far off in our minds.

We still had a ways to go, of course. I wanted to be able to run the business full time by the time I got married. Nick reinforced this in talking about what he'd done.

D.J. – Where Gia is in books, Futures in this universe for Gia, Kathy:

Kimmy could have done a lot worse. Some rough, domineering guy could have taken advantage of her, just like one could have Gia. But, while Steph boosted Gia's self-confidence a lot, Kimmy didn't have much hope.

Thanks to Steph, Gia had received Christ. Kimmy had done so a few years earlier when we took her to an Easter play. But, their earthly lives and opportunities were quite different. Gia spoke of teaching and even running for the school board, though she never learned how to find good men, and had three rough divorces before finally meeting a veterinarian, Matt, who really bonded nicely with her girl, Rocki.[425]

Still, Steph plus her own experiences taught her to heavily support and help strong, two-parent families and children, and help Rocki as much as she could, though it was very hard. Gia hated what constant fighting did to kids. She'd be constructiveand help others now, instead of hurting herself; well, except with her marriages. She was over that intense anger. And, she had begun to settle down to where she didn't seek revenge on guys or try to go with anyone who was a real rebel.

Kirsten could have helped her see the same thing. Still, if after the divorce Gia's mom had chosen a different apartment, in another part of town, she may have had at much rougher road. I'd have met her through a group helping at the college, but we definitely wouldn't have had the huge influence we did. She may even have wound up like Kathy Santoni, struggling to raise a baby at a very young age. And, Kirsten would have been the one helping her most of all.

Speaking of Kathy, she'd been on dates but had broken up quickly with each guy. She was very protective of her son, and had been admonished by many people not to go with any man who could possibly pose a danger to him or to her. She was desperate for help, it was just her and her parents, but she was making it.

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[425] From "Fuller House" series, It's logical canon for TVU and NetU; nothing keeps them from meeting.

Steve and I discussed that on our date. I reminded Steve what I'd told him before, how Duane and Kimmy almost got married. Then, it just naturally happened: We each began talking of marriage. It was way too soon, of course. I had lots of things I wanted to do yet, but also lots of things I'd accomplished. I wanted to graduate from college, but after that, if things kept going the way they were, wedding bells would be in my future.

Little did I know that at the area's most popular young person's hangout a couple years later, I'd meet a man I might have married but instead helped someone else.

Tommy – Still Part of Tanner Memories:

I met D.J. and Steve because of my future bride in 1998. D.J. was nice, I was glad my future bride had had someone to help, even if D.J. had been kind of distant from her at times because of protecting her sisters.

At this point, I wouldn't have even known her in the world where we married; I was starting to work as a fireman and really enjoying it. My desire, too, was to help people, and that's probably what turned my future bride on. I could tell D.J. and Steve were a great couple; he was a really lucky guy.

That's getting ahead of ourselves a bit, though.

Michelle - On D.J.'s future & family:

D.J. hadn't been as proactive as she could have been. She was still great with me, and I knew whenever she punished me she loved me and was trying to help me. I never defied her the way I did Dad at times. I didn't want to think about what D.J. would do.

Because she hadn't spent as much time mothering me, D.J. had gotten a lot of activity out of her system. She wasn't home much, because she spent so much time helping others. She also traveled a lot over breaks. Starting a family was much closer than it might have been, because she had done many things already that she wanted to do before then. Had she been proactive and exercised her maternal instinct more, she might have put off having a baby for a decade.

She wasn't ready to have one yet, of course. She intended to remain pure. But, she wasn't as focused on a career as she might have been. And, that meant she and Steve were seeing as much of each other as possible. Steve often helped on her volunteer projects when he could, and went with her on trips during breaks.

Jeff and I enjoyed each other's company, too. I liked to tease Dad that I wasn't going to go through all that dating. I was sticking with one boyfriend forever.

Becky:

Michelle still loved to dream, just like many girls. However, I told her it was a one in ten thousand chance this would be the one to marry her. After all, my one true love had been halfway across the country disguised as Elvis. And, yes, I remember Teddy, but they just pretended because someone suggested it.

Nicky & Alex - Oct. 2:

We had our first really big fight the previous evening. D.J. was too busy studying to help while she babysat us.

Yeah, you even tried to tape construction paper over my eyes the next day.

Well, of course, you said you didn't want to see my face, so I covered your eyes.

That just shows we were still friends and wanted to help each other, but it was hard for us to figure out what to do, because we'd never argued as much as we had then.

Denise did a great job of helping us, though. I don't remember what it was about, and we couldn't even remember what started it then. The important part was we were friends again by the time it was over.

Jesse – Nicky & Alex in Half-Day Kindergarten:

We had debated for a while about what to do with the twins' schooling. With the girls, it had been easier. Joey and I were inexperienced, Steph needed the distraction, so when pam died, she was put in full-day. She could read decently by then. With Michelle, all of us had careers – Joey didn't have Ranger Joe yet, but when Danny was making his decision still had that TV show that never got off the ground. But, more importantly, a couple babies on the way meant more work. She could memorize well and – like Steph – played well quietly. So, she went to full-day, too.

With the boys, it was different. Like Michelle, they wouldn't be five till mid-November. Yes, Becky and I were busy, but we would be living there with Danny and the others for a while. There were no new kids for certain. Yes, it was possible in mid-year we'd get a match, adopt, and move out, but we might not find a good house right away, and even if we didn't stay there, they could always go over to Danny's, since Joye would still be there in the afternoon before the girls got home.

Add to that that boys are often more restless than girls at four, so the age thing, with them being only four yet, made us decide to put them in half-day Kindergarten. It was more structured than preschool, which was more like a playgroup than an academic thing, since Becky wanted to baby them a bit and I'd gotten over the habit of trying to push too hard, like when I tried to teach them once myself, and so on.

They were all ready for school all day when first grade came next year, and did very well in that situation. I was glad we'd kept them from having to grow up too fast.

Joey - Oct. 4 – First kiss with Suzie:

Suzie and I snuck away from Wendy's fourth birthday party. We were having so much fun. It was the first time I'd said "I love you" to her. I told her I wanted to say it as Popeye, but she didn't like the violence in those cartoons, so I refrained. I did Fred Flintstone instead.

Then, we talked for a couple minutes while the kids played a game with her parents' help. "Suzie, you know…it's so hard for me to say sometimes. I mean, it was always so easy with Danny's girls, but here…"

"Joey, I understand. The kids need a father, but they need one who's willing to take his time. You've done that."

"I'm glad you appreciate me," I said softly as our faces drew closer together. "Suzie…I just want what's best for you. And, I want what's best for the kids. I know it has to be rough." She nodded. "But, I really think we have something special. I really do love you." I didn't notice till later that I'd said it normally, and not in a cartoon voice; I was finally feeling comfortable not doing comedy all the time in my relationships, though I still did some, of course. Our lips were very close.

"I love you, too." We kissed passionately for a moment, our first kiss.

"All right!" Justin declared. I chuckled as I glanced over at him.

Wendy stood beside him with starry eyes. “Does this mean you’ll be our Daddy now?” She was infatuated with the notion that her mother had kissed a man. Justin, however, suddenly frowned.

“Excuse me.” I walked over to them, and sat on the floor. Justin sat next to me, and Wendy naturally climbed into my lap, as she would if I was reading a story. “Guys, look…Wendy, this isn’t a Disney movie, okay. I mean, who would I get to play me? Or your mom; nobody can top her. It won’t happen that fast.”

Justin seemed relieved.

“And, Justin, I know it’s rough. You like seeing your mom and I in love, but you’ve got lots of emotions right now. The girls were the same way when Danny, Michelle’s dad, started dating. I just want you to know, nobody can replace your dad. I wouldn’t dare try. He was very special, I know. But, your mom and he agreed they could see other people, just like Michelle’s parents, before Pam died.” Justin remembered me telling him about her. “They didn’t do that so one of them could be replaced. They did that so there could be more love spread around, so if someone was available, you could have a man of the house again. Okay?” He accepted what I’d said. “Good. I’m sure your mom’s told you, but you’re important, and it wouldn’t be right for anyone to come into the family unless you’re all comfortable. And, hey, you love me, right?”

“Of course. You’re the best,” Justin said as they embraced me.

I rose, and asked Suzie how I’d done.

“That was super; I couldn’t have said it any better.” She blushed a little shyly. “It’s amazing you can say that and do all those cartoons, too.”

“Well, it comes from my heart. That’s what’s important.”

D.J. – Nov. 12 – Michelle Turns Ten:

“There’s the double digit girl,” Stephanie said excitedly as Dad and Michelle came back from the salon. “Hope you liked the books D.J. and I bought.”

“Yeah, thanks, Steph. Thanks, D.J..” She hugged both of us.

I invited them up to their room for Michelle’s special surprise. Michelle opened her nightstand drawer, and saw an autographed picture I’d put in there

“Remember how you came to me and told me you thought about skipping school to get that last month?”[426] she threw her arms around me. “I’m so proud you did what was right, and didn’t try to skip school to get that like I did. Michelle agreed, and recalled she’d snuck away once, but knew it wasn’t right now.

Stephanie recalled. “You were too upset then, though, after Papouli died. And, you told the school nurse you felt sick; they knew that was why.[427] That was just Uncle Jesse rubbing off on us, anyway; D.J. knew just talking after that things were okay. We all tried to hide our feelings a little at times because he did. He told us after that how wrong he’d been. He’s had to come to grips with a lot while living here.”

“Yeah. Can I talk to D.J. alone?” Stephanie left. Michelle sat close to me and said, “You didn’t have to do this.”

“I know, but I wanted to. College classes don’t always last all day, so I could.”

“I mean, I was wiling to go without it.”

She was very thankful I’d taught her to control her impulses, though she didn’t

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[426] In the book “My Secret, Secret Admirer” she’s caught before she can try her D.J.-like ploy

[427] “The Last Dance” – she clearly told them since they called; it would be excused and even expected

remember all the earliest lessons well. It took a picture of the half-eaten mess of samples to remind her of the trouble she got in for that. That, post-Disneyworld, the Gumby and running away, and the pre-wedding ones would sort of blend together.

By now, she thought less about what I'd do, and more about how wrong it was, though. She told me, "I'm glad you stopped me from being bad the times you did. I sure hope this one girl in one of the other fifth grade classes is okay. She had to go to the hospital overnight after playing with fireworks."

"Wow, that's dangerous!" I said.

"I know. If I ever did that…" She shook her head. "That's like what Uncle Jesse said about what Mom might have done if she ever caught him doing dangerous stuff. You'd do a lot more than yell, that's for sure." She blushed as she said, "If I ever did some of what he did, I don't know what you'd do. And the fireworks that one girl did…" She whistled and shook her head.

I emphasized, "You'd be grounded for a long time, and do lots of chores, that's for sure." I never needed to mention the past problems now. She knew I'd be tough, and had heard other kids with moms like me talk about how they handled some wildness. Michelle would never dream of being really wild now, and neither would those friends, thankfully. Michelle made sure to hang around the right kind of friend by this time.

"I'd be making stuff for kids in the burn unit, too, if I did that," she guessed.

I agreed. I always tried to do more than I could. Eddie, the fellow who I'd visited in the nursing home sometimes before I got way too busy, had died recently. I'd spoken quite a bit with Michelle about how the family had felt. She was learning to have far more genuine concern for others than before.

She changed the subject, so I let it drop. "I know I don't say it much D.J., but, I'm trying hard to let my feelings show more, like you say. And…well, thanks for not letting me get involved with stuff like that." She leaned on my shoulder. She was really saying, "Thanks for the tough boundary, so I didn't get as wild as Uncle Jesse was."

I put an arm around her. "Anytime. Thanks for being so good about telling the truth." As we hugged, I sensed that she'd really begun to grow. This classmate's actions were certainly something that woke her up a little. But, the autograph thing was before that. Michelle was really starting to mature.

Danny - Thurs., Nov. 27, 1996:

What a crowded Thanksgiving table. D.J.'s comment years ago - a thousand people here - seemed ready to come to fruition. It almost was a thousand plates of food, or at least seemed that way the way Steve ate.

Caleb came for dessert, and Jeff came to play, too. Jesse's parents were there, and so were Suzie, Justin, and Wendy. Steve and D.J. ate some at ours, then had dinner with his parents, to take stress off the cooks. But, Becky's parents were here for the first time in years, too. We also followed our tradition of major announcements at Thanksgiving.

Jesse and Becky had been approved for a home visit by an adoption agency. They were also looking at moving. They planned to stay in our neighborhood, and it might take a while for a place to come up for sale that suited them, though.

They'd been interested in adoption with Kathy's situation, Karen's experience so far, and D.J.'s fascinating dinner table discussions. They wanted to adopt a slightly older child, perhaps preschool age. Such a child could be placed with them faster than a baby;

there were long waiting lists for babies. They would even adopt siblings if need be.

Stephanie:

I reminded them they could end up adopting a Charles. His father had managed to remain sober now, but sadly, plenty in that situation didn‘t. D.J. found out about him from someone at her school. He was doing very well now, though he still had a few problems. I got to talk to him myself last week. He lived near Oakland now.

I knew Jesse and Becky would be great. Adopting a child – two siblings, actually - was in my future, too, along with having some naturally. I wasn't quite as intrigued as I might have been. However, as I watched D.J., then Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky, helping kids, I recognized there were many who needed loving homes.

The question of bedrooms quickly emerged. D.J. actually seemed most likely to get the attic as a bachelorette pad. Whenever Joey and Suzie wed, he could just move into her place; moving to the attic made little sense for him.

Michelle and I had grown very close, though. I was perfectly willing to accept her in our room the first couple months of middle school, as that can be a rough transition. I knew she‘d appreciate having me right there. We planned to go out and select bedroom suites sometime in the middle of 1997, to be delivered by Christmas. Yes, I know, that's planning way ahead. But, our dad would always be incredibly organized.

Becky – Jan. 3, 1997 - On her parents, adoption. etc.:

My parents came in for my birthday after one of them got sick and they got sidetracked over Thanksgiving, or it would have been more crowded. It's very hard to split the time when you've got all those kids, and it was easier to fly out there.

However, they had come a couple times at Thanksgiving, and at other times, and the girls had enjoyed Nebraska. You know how Paul Harvey always talks about Nebraska being home to the couple that's been married the longest on any given day? Well, they never quite made it to the longest married for their day, but they made it till 2019, when Dad died; I went out to help my mom a lot that year, and she wound up dying not too many months after he did.

That type of love was the kind we wanted to give an adopted child. We'd discussed it ever since Kathy Santoni debated placing her baby with us. She was doing well with her boy, but now, we wanted to help an older child. We knew the waiting list for an infant was really long, and also that children sometimes needed even more help after being in the system for a while. We knew we could handle it.

It was kind of confusing, because our home now was not what that child would enter, most likely. However, that child would be at Danny's a lot, as it featured the main babysitters and everything. Plus, we had our attic apartment all to ourselves. So, the social worker could get good ideas of how we lived, and what life would be like for such a child. That way, they would know how best to match s with one – or more.

We also started explaining the notion to Nicky and Alex a while back, how most mommies have babies in their tummies, but God had a special one that was placed in our hearts, and we wouldn't know who it was till it was time.

This seemed best; after all, it did take a while. I was into my upper thirties; I'd had my own talk show in Omaha before coming out here. Sure, that's not a huge market, but it's still an achievement. So, we felt this was the best route.

As for being older than Jesse, he didn't even think about that, not like Danny did. To him, the important thing was love, no matter what age. Hey, we're talking about a guy who, before he settled down, didn't always catch a girl's last name, it seemed.

Jesse – On Adoption, Getting Family Ready:

Not everyone has good experiences, but you know what? That's because human beings are in control of things, instead of trusting God completely. I'm living proof of how people mess things up; I sure messed up when I was younger. But, you can't throw the whole thing out the window just because of one bad experience.

We had first brought up the concept of adopting with Nicky and Alex early last month; meaning as Christmas got closer they thought we might get a kid under the tree, being only five. It's so cute the way they think. Anyway, they liked the fact that someone was sort of in charge of knowing who would be matched best. And yet, we knew God was the one who we would trust most of all.

This is al part of realizing other people matter. I felt we were doing a pretty good job of teaching Nicky and Alex that. After a few months of talking about it, the boys were all ready, and I could tell they were really excited. The only sad part was, it might take a while – this would be harder, in a way, than saying you're pregnant once you start to show. They can't feel the kicks and stuff. Still, I knew they'd be okay, and they were.

Danny - June. 19, 1997 – Caleb's Higher Calling:

Caleb's family always was more dedicated to the Lord than we were. Even after Michelle's accident, we were still just a family with more faith than most.

He proved that today. Steph could tell he'd been doing quite a bit of soul searching. Today, he confirmed it. He felt called to be a missionary.

To her credit, Stephanie and he stayed together for almost another whole year. However, as hard as she tried, she couldn't picture herself as a missionary's wife. I couldn't, either; I'd struggled with letting D.J. go to Spain for six weeks.

He'd committed his life to God a few months ago, but then, it wasn't nearly as constraining on Stephanie. She decided maybe they could work together on something like Veggie Tales. She didn't like to admit it, but she liked Veggie Tales as much as Nicky and Alex did. She almost liked them as much as Joey did, in fact.

It was a summer of transitions. D.J. would be taking all nursing courses for the next two years. Jesse and Becky would move out. Stephanie got used to the idea that if Caleb felt called, she had to feel the same way, or she wouldn't be with him forever.

Stephanie:

I knew beforehand that Caleb might become a pastor or missionary. He could even have been a missionary here in the United States, which wouldn't have been too bad. I preferred staying closer to home, though. I'd be traveling with Gia to Massachusetts for a meeting with other S.A.D.D. students, as we discussed the name and focus change. But, living so far away seemed daunting.

Caleb was happy for me, though, and so were his parents. He said, "Stephanie, don't feel bad if you're not called to go. Not everyone is called to a mission field far away; your mission field is here." His parents pointed out the great work I'd done with Gia, and how I was helping other people with S.A.D.D.. Gia was actually taking the lead

a little in our school, which made me so proud!

I was happy for Caleb, too. And, our relationship had taught me an incredible amount about myself. I learned how to be patient within a relationship. I discovered new talents, such as writing. I suspect I didn't focus on that nearly as much because I was so busy with other things. If D.J. had been more proactive, perhaps my writing would have blossomed earlier. Caleb and I enjoyed talking for hours on end about how to improve my story ideas. Also, I'd recognized just how wonderful purity and wholesomeness could be. That, in turn, helped Gia, too.

As the months wore on, I acknowledged that we wouldn't be marrying and spending our lives together. However, knowing Caleb had been a real blessing.

Michelle - Sat., Aug. 1, 1997 – Jesse moves out:

A couple weeks shy of ten years after he moved in, Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky moved out. They'd found a place about five blocks away from our house. It was a beautiful home, with a large yard.

There was a girl, Melanie, who seemed like a very nice match for them. I was already looking forward to possibly having her as a cousin. She was three, and had been in foster homes since she was a baby. It was a sad case, but they would do their best to make it a happy ending. She acted loud, and threw tantrums, but while none of us were ever like that, at least they could deal with those well. They'd met her once, but she wouldn't be there for a weekend for over a month. Still, we were all really excited.

Jesse:

Michelle had bonded much more with D.J. and Steph the last few years, and not having me on that floor helped a lot. It's normal for a kid or even a teen to cry a little right when someone moves out if they're going to another state or something; I mean, it's a huge change, and their brains can't totally comprehend the concept that things will still be okay. Some kids are more emotional, too. Michelle got a little teary, but no more than all of us did. Nicky and Alex probably took it a little harder than she did.

However, there were fun, new things to look forward to, and we easily focused on those. In another couple years, Michelle would be over here babysitting a lot, anyway; she could be now if we were there but too busy and needed help with the kids. Stephanie and Gia had gone with Danny early last month to Massachusetts for that S.A.D.D. get-together and a little vacation, and they'd had a great time. Danny would even let them travel with their history class to several countries in Europe for six weeks the following summer. They were both maturing fast. And, D.J. moved into the bachelorette pad, although we wondered how long that would last.

Danny - What happened to Vicki?:

D.J. and Steve made a great couple. Gia's mom and I had been chaperones with the girls and some other students last month at the S.A.D.D. meeting, but we could tell there wasn't anything big between us anymore.

I considered suggesting a trip down to New York, too. After all, Vicki was still living there. Of course, the way the media worked, if she didn't do too well, she might be anywhere. Or, she could be on assignment somewhere.

No, I wasn't ready to check into it. That part was past me. Still, I had to wonder.

After all, she was forty now. She wouldn't be working in news forever; she might end up retiring just because unless someone worked for a long, long time and was among the best in the country, one didn't last a really long time at that position. Local talk shows were different, of course.

I never made the trip, though we did reconnect and remained friendcs for years. As it would turn out, she was going with someone by mid-1997, and would be married by 2002. She did come back to visit us when her husband died in the mid-2010s, , but it wasn't meant to be between us.

Joey - Saturday, Oct. 3, 1997 – Finally, the Right One:

Things had really blossomed between Suzie and me over the last year. I'd been hanging out at her place all the time lately, it seemed. The girls didn't need me there anymore, and they were too busy with friends anyway. Michelle and her friends generally used my room if both had friends there; of course.

Danny had brought bunches of catalogues for Stephanie and Michelle to scan, and they had picked out almost everything for their bedroom suites. The house was changing, and so was I. Because today, I just naturally blurted out something I'd begun to think I'd never say with real meaning.

"Will you marry me?"

Suzie began to cry. I could tell they were tears of joy, though. She nodded quickly, and as we embraced, I assured her that Peter, her deceased husband, would be really happy. She concurred.

The prospect was exciting and daunting at the same time. I suddenly realized I was going to be a husband and a father. How often would I have to be really responsible, how much of my comedy could I keep? How difficult would it be?

Danny reassured me that I'd done great with the girls. I simply had to remember how I'd helped them at the best times.

Becky - Fri., Oct. 9 - Adopting:

Jesse was stunned, but happy. Joey was glad Jesse had advised him how to look for love, and thanked him quite a bit. However, we were busy with our own situation.

Melanie had come for a weekend visit. And, she really screamed up a fit a couple times. One time, I just wrapped my arms and legs around Melanie's so she couldn't thrash around. Unable to throw herself around, she quickly dissolved into tears, and we cuddled for a few minutes.

We had to put her in timeout a few times, too. She'd be tough to handle, but we'd fallen in love with her from the beginning. The next step was permanent placement, and we knew we wanted this little girl. As rough as it was to handle her this weekend, it broke all four of our hearts to see her go back to her foster family for a week before the permanent placement, even though they were a great family. Jesse and I knew she needed lots of help and support, but we were ready to supply it. And, Nicky and Alex wanted to be big brothers and help her in the worst way.

Nicky and Alex - Oct. 16 – Excited About Adoption:

Today, we became big brothers for real! The funny part was, she wasn't a baby.

She cried like it sometimes, though. I guess she'd been really sad a lot in her life.

We would have been, too, if we'd been in foster homes our whole lives.

She could tell we loved her, though. She just needed to know everything would be all right when things went wrong.

Uncle Danny taught us well. We kept hugging and kissing her so much, Mom and Dad had to tell us to stop; we were driving her nuts. I think she appreciated it, though.

We'd argue sometimes later on, but it was still the most wonderful thing, to watch her grow from a troubled youngster into a really great kid.

This is when we really felt like her family, though of course the adoption wasn't official for a few months yet; that comes after permanent placement.

D.J. - Dec. 25 – A moment to remember, Steve "proposes":

Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky brought their family over after a few hours, and Suzie brought hers over soon after that. I couldn't believe the house was so full.

Wendy caught me in my old room, which was now Stephanie's. She squealed with glee. "Congratulations!" she shouted.

"On what?" I asked with a laugh.

"He didn't tell you?"

"Who didn't tell me what?"

"He wants to marry you!"

I gasped. "You…you mean Steve?" A goofy grin was plastered on my face; I didn't know what to say.

"Yes, he didn't tell you yet? I thought the bride was supposed to know." I couldn't get any words out. "Are you choking?"

"No, no, I'm not choking." I led her over to Stephanie's bed as Steph walked in and asked how her suite looked. "This is great. Wendy, when did you hear this?"

"Last night. Steve and you were at my house. I was pretending to be asleep while he read to me. That's when he said it," Wendy explained.

"Said what, that he likes your name because it's the same as a major fast food chain?" Stephanie quipped.

"Steph, he wants to marry me!" I shouted.

As we embraced, Wendy spouted, "He said the name thing last week. If he didn't tell you, I'll go and let him tell you." She left.

Dad was the next one into the room, as Stephanie and I spoke excitedly about Steve. "Hey, I heard the big news," he said with a tear in his eye. He embraced me while fighting back tears. "I just want you to know…"

"Wow, everyone knows about this but you," Stephanie commented.

"What, he hasn't told you? But, you and he were alone in the kitchen, and I thought…forget I said anything."

"Dad, Steve can't concentrate in the kitchen," I reminded him.

"Oh. Right. Well, he said he was thinking about it, and I said…oh, there he is. Come on, Steph." Dad and Stephanie left.

Steve stood there more anxious then I'd ever seen him. "Deej, we've done so much together. It's incredible. We haven't had as much time as we'd like, but that's good, we've gotten to understand what it'll be like, like your mom and dad on Christmas when you had the chicken pox, like your dad told me." He cleared his throat. "Deej, I know you want to finish college. I have to prepare, too. But, while a longer engagement

is best, I just couldn't wait. I want to spend my life loving you." He got down on one knee, and pulled out a ring. "D.J. Tanner…will you please marry me?"

I shrieked excitedly as I placed the ring on my finger. "Steve, it's beautiful! It must have cost you a fortune."

"I know, I had to cut down to four meals a day. Seriously, it took just about all my savings; I know the wedding ring will do the same after I get them built up again. But, we've got a couple years for that. For right now…let's just get started, at least."

"Oh, Steve, yes, I'll marry you!" I leaped into his arms as he stood, and we embraced. "Steve, this is so incredible. I can't believe it yet."

I spent the next few days dreaming of my future. It would be a great one. And, I kept thinking about Mom. I knew she would be proud of me.

Joey:

When D.J. and Steve came downstairs and announced it, everyone was thrilled. Suzie and I began discussing our own plans. We concluded that August would work out nicely. It gave her kids a little more time to get used to having me as a father. It also allowed me to straighten things out comedy-wise. I wouldn't be going on a whole lot of tours anymore, but I didn't plan to totally eliminate it, either. Actually, I figured if Jesse ever moved to the morning drive time slot, I could simply get a job elsewhere. Now, I had a lot more experience, having had a steady job.

D.J. and Steve, on the other hand, planned to wait till she graduated. It would be sometime in the spring or summer of 1999.

Stephanie – Sun., Jan. 17, 1998 – Sweet Sixteen:

When Gia had her Sweet Sixteen around eighteen months ago, she didn't have much of a father figure to celebrate it with. In fact, she enjoyed hanging around our Uncle Jesse, because she knew she was starting down the road from rebel to upstanding citizen the same way he had, and needed pointers at times.

With me, however, just like with Michelle – and D.J. earlier – Dad really went all out. He was always so good at making us feel special.

There were no ski trips for me, and he'd already promised he wouldn't go out and buy Michelle a horse just because it was her 16th – he didn't, but only because she wasn't interested in them, though I thought he might since I was in college by that time.

I think the best part, though, is what Gia said she felt after we'd helped her mom – who was pretty poor – throw a party for her. She felt really like people cared. She wasn't yet to the point back then where she realized money didn't buy happiness; she was a little down about the fact she couldn't have the best of everything.

By now, though, she really realized that anyone can feel good, even in tough times. After all, as Dad said, he loaned Joey their last $800, and he and Mom just knew, somehow, they had to stick together and make it through. And, they did.

Becky – Sat., Apr. 5, 1998 – Women's Issues:

D.J. recalled talks with Pam about the birds and the bees – Pam had to stop Danny from leaving the room once, he was so nervous. Still, she was very grateful to have me to talk to about woman stuff when I first came. She reached puberty a short time later, and I took her to buy things the guys would be too embarrassed to go with her to buy.

D.J. and I did the same for Steph – and also had those talks about the birds and the bees. Once Danny had begun a talk about that, only to get so caught up in the subject of birds he never even made it to bees, let alone reproduction. He wound up able to talk about it a few times, but at other times, he stayed stuck on other creatures and their habits. He could have done it, but seemed to rely on us.

I figured I'd be doing the same with Michelle, but she had a close enough relationship with D.J. that she could go up to that bachelorette pad in the attic and talk about many things. Including today, when Michelle stomped up there and declared to D.J., "I will never ask Dad about a feminine issue again!"

"I know how you feel," D.J. said tenderly as she walked over to Michelle, put an arm around her, and led her over to her couch. "What did he do, start rambling about the proper scientific classification of the California Condor again?"

"Worse! Dad was doing so well at letting me choose stuff for a while, but now he doesn't even want to think about what I'll have to be buying because of puberty. Did he think I would be nine or ten forever?!"

"It's tough, I know. Just think about the fact you've got two sisters who love you, and who take the time to talk about these things with you."

"How can I – Dad's so nuts he probably thinks I should be back in Kindergarten."

D.J. knew Danny could be upsetting sometimes. Jesse and I leaving, and Joey being ready to leave, had made him once more very anxious about any sort of change. Still, she also wanted Michelle to learn to be more respectful and caring, like she'd learned to be after doing that spring cleaning with him. Michelle couldn't see it as a mini-crisis that related to the loss of Pam. But, it probably was.

Speaking in a very loving tone, trying to take after me, D.J. said, "Michelle, you will always be welcome up here. In fact, when Steve and I get married and I move out, you're not only welcome to come, you would be more than welcome to live with us."

That would never be necessary. But, D.J. knew of cases where a younger sibling had so little respect for parental authority that they'd gone to live with an older sibling. Those centered on parents who were totally uninvolved, fooling around with or even marrying bad influences, or something else that would have been totally unlike Danny. Danny really did a good job with everything but disciplining Michelle.

"But, you need to have more respect for Dad," D.J. continued in a loving yet firm tone. "All these moves are driving him nuts. He just doesn't handle change very well. You know to be nice to him."

Michelle sighed. "I guess you're right; I'm sorry," she said humbly. Showing she was starting to have more concern for others, she started to look a tad concerned. "Dad would never get that bad – would he?"

"No; not with all of us supporting him."

Michelle felt very relieved. "That's good. I'm glad he never drinks or anything, at least. Do you think he cries sometimes when we're not around?"

"I think he's too busy cleaning for that," I confessed. "Although, truthfully, he might have some when we were younger."

"It's so hard to believe it can cause him problems so much later."

"I felt the same way at your age. Tell you what, just come to me with all that stuff. Steph would like the chance to help, too, of course. I'll talk about that with her and Aunt Becky, too. And, you've got Suzie. But, don't be too upset at Dad. He may not call

it that," D.J. asserted, "but it wouldn't surprise me if there's a part of him that's still in mourning. Wishing Mom were here, and feeling like he can't function without her. A very small part, but a part. We don't mourn like those who have no hope. But, we still have to get past losses, and that's hard for him. Even when Vicki left him to take that job in New York, he rearranged stuff for weeks, huh?"[428]

Michelle agreed reluctantly. "I remember talking with you one time, about why Dad wasn't punishing me much. I guess we really have to have pity on him."

"Right. It's been rough. But, you know, I'm starting to understand, and care about him, more and more, as I grow older."

They laughed, thinking about how D.J.'s comment made her sound like she was in her forties. She recalled how she'd worried he was having a real crisis when Danny hadn't come home yet after she returned from a party, not knowing he'd found another date when one left him. While neither of those relationships lasted, it was one more sign that Danny would always make it through, but that he struggled at times.

Tommy – July 4. 1998 – A Struggling Mother, A Helping Friend:

I didn't go out with her at first. But, there was something about this boy's mother that showed she needed a friend.

Her name was Kathy Santoni, and she'd brought her four-year-old, almost five, to something our fire station put on for local kids; something that included fireworks so they could be safe. Okay, kids that age weren't going to be setting off fireworks, we hoped, but adults can get fingers blown off just as easily if they're not careful.

I'd have been hanging with D.J. if we'd been going out, if not missing it entirely to be with her family. Instead, sensing that she needed a break while her boy seemingly used up all the bounces in the bouncey house, we got to talking.

"I notice you don't have a ring; are you single?" I asked casually after a few minutes talking about her bundle of joy.

She nodded. "We do a lot together – he's everything to me."

"That's good." I wasn't sure how to broach this next topic, so I just said, "I can imagine it's been pretty stressful."

You better believe it," she replied, not taking her eyes off her son.

I finally gave my name, and decided a good way to start might be to ask if she'd taken CPR and other classes, since I knew the people who offered them. I said I imagined she did; I could tell she was very protective of him.

"Oh, yeah, CPR, first aid, you name it. Thankfully I've never needed CPR, but probably every type of first aid," she quipped. She was glad to see me laugh.

"Well, if you ever have any questions, I'll ber glad to answer them."

D.J.:

Kathy and I had patched up any problems, thanks to Stephanie and Michelle; it likely wouldn't have happened had they been busier with other things, but Steph was babysitting a bit, which helped.

Of course, had I been proactive, I'd have possibly been helping her get ready for an encounter like this.

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[428] "Is It True About Stephanie?" This shows much of Danny's obsessiveness stems from loss in some way. Still, despite that, he functioned well enough it wasn't the problem it is for some in that situation

Kathy called me up out of the blue – we still didn't talk much, so I was surprised that she didn't call because she'd lost Steph's number, but because she wanted to know about a guy. "I kind of like him, but you know how I try to avoid any possible problems for him… my parents are out of town, so…"

"Do you want Steve and I to come out with you?"

"Yeah, I mean, not a date yet, but, well, maybe lunch."

Kathy clearly didn't totally trust her desires yet, even if she did trust her instincts. She would be able to tell if a guy seemed safe, but she felt a little vulnerable when it came to a guy's looks. So, I called Steve and we agreed.

Like I said, had I been more proactive, maybe Steve and I wouldn't have been near getting engaged, but we'd still have been friends, and thus we'd have still gone out with Kathy and this guy as friends.

Steve – Sun., Jul. 20, 1998:

We were glad to help. Tommy was nice. We went to Anthony's for pizza after church since we weren't working; Steph watched her boy.

We talked for an hour or so; nothing major, except D.J. and I were excited about possible wedding plans, though it was almost a year away.

Tommy and Kathy eventually agreed to see each other again, but it would be another month or so till he even met her boy, Scott. She was extremely cautious. Of course, given how Mr. Tanner was, that didn't seem all that off.

Danny – Sat., Aug. 16, 1998 – Victory – for Joey and Danny:

Joey and Suzie tied the knot today, with Wendy the cutest flower girl. Joey had slowed down in his comedy quite a bit, but there would still be a special moment awaiting him in that regard. Like his marriage, it just took patience.

I was becoming more and more resigned to the notion that I might be single the rest of my life. I still enjoyed the idea of going out with women, but I was forty years old. My youngest girl was eleven, and I was starting to feel the effects of aging a little.

These were supposed to be years of promise, when Pam and I could stroll toward middle and then old age with confidence, in each other's arms. D.J. was right, I struggled, so I got uptight about Michelle becoming a teen. I wanted it to be the way it was.

However, I was also growing more comfortable with not having Pam around. Finally, I was witnessing a major moment for one of my friends, and think about Joey and the wonderful family he had, without really missing Pam.

Of course, I still missed her, but there wasn't the sadness there had been. My mourning was all about how life here on Earth wasn't the same without her. I kept trying to cling to things that were the same as when she was here, hoping the pain would go away. It didn't help like I thought it would.

However, I hadn't lived in the past like some people do. I'd focused on the present, and enjoyed many wonderful times. Some overly much, simply so I wouldn't think about the past, but I enjoyed the present.

And, in the end, that's what helped. As more wonderful things happened to my girls, Jesse and Joey, I was more secure in thinking that while Pam was in Heaven, I could not only survive but thrive here. It had taken over a year – till Steph was "Yankee Doodle" – to get accustomed to thinking that, "Even if Pam's not here, we can still make

great memories." It had taken another ten for me to get to the next point.

Now, however, while I still missed Pam, and always tried to keep busy so I didn't have to think about it, I didn't feel the loss as deeply as I had. It would still be a gradual process, but I felt like that small part that D.J. said was still in mourning was finally healing. Not only could we all have fun, in my quieter moments I could reflect and not feel lost without Pam. And, while I cleaned a lot, I wasn't as wild about it as before, since those quiet moments of reflection didn't leave me so sad.

Jesse – Aug. 21 – Victory for him, too; no screaming:

I'd overcome a lot, too. So much that when the boys broke something very precious, I didn't scream at anyone. I cried, but I didn't scream.

We'd moved out about a year ago, but the boys had gotten pretty much used to playing well on their own. Today, however, they managed to drop my guitar and break it while trying to move it to get some stuff.

Becky was trying to get Melanie to take a nap. I heard a crash, and hollered up to my room, "What happened?" Now, there's two things you can hear that mean bad news after a crash like that. The better one is "nothing." That means the kid figures it's no big deal, a vase or lamp got knocked over, you send them to their room and maybe make them pick up the pieces, badda bing, n more problem. You hope the kid's sorry, but if you hear them say their sorry before you even get there, that's trouble.

And, that's just what I heard. A couple loud "I'm sorry"s.

I raced up there, took one look at my Elvis-autographed guitar, and began weeping. "My gui-gui…my gui..gui…" I cradled it in my arms.

"We're sorry, Daddy." Alex looked at Nicky. "Do you think he's going to yell?"

"I think he's going to cry first," Nicky responded.

"Is everything okay, Jess?" Becky asked. She came walking into the room, took one look at my broken guitar, and said, "Oh, no! Did the boys do that?"

I nodded slowly. "Boys, I'm going to let your mom talk with you for a moment. I need a moment alone with my gui..guit…"

"Guitar," Nicky said.

Alex shook his head as Becky took them out of the room to lecture them. "I don't think it was a good idea to say it for him."

Before she was done, I composed myself. I was surprised by how calm I felt. I went down to the living room and stood next to Becky. "Now, listen," I explained in a very firm, somewhat loud, yet very loving manner, "I'm very upset with what you did. Now, you're both going to timeout and then you'll be grounded at home after that for a long while. But, I want you to know that I love you very, very much. We're going to have a long talk about respecting others' property. But, I can promise you this. I will make sure you understand that I love you, and I'm not trying to be mean or anything."

And, I succeeded. The talks we had before and after timeout went very well. I'd told the social worker I was pretty sure I could do it when we adopted Melanie, and I was right. It was a longer version of my correcting Michelle when she was messing with my recording stuff; just enough so they knew what they did was really bad, but not enough to traumatize or anything. I felt great. There was one area I'd followed God's plan perfectly, you might say, by showing that grace and mercy no matter what. Of course, the fact it could be fixed a little helped, but it didn't matter. What mattered was they were okay.

Joey –Aug. 23 – Moving out:

It wasn't the huge transition that it would have been years earlier. With Suzie working sometimes, her kids were over here with me, or I was over there watching them, or we were all together…well, let's just say that it hadn't been like those first nine years for the last two. So, I moved out today, after a week-long honeymoon, and into Suzie's place with her kids, and a few pets that had made their way there.

Her kids loved all the cartoon stuff that I moved into their house. A fair amount of it had been moved already, of course.

Jesse had taken his recording studio with him, though he didn't use it much. So, now the basement was more or less a playroom; you couldn't unseal what had been a garage door or anything, after all. So, the question remained as to what to do withthat extra bedroom, now that D.J. was already in the attic, and wouldn't be in the house at that time next year. Steph had remained in the room she shared with Michelle, while Michelle got her old room back then.

She decided she didn't want to move again and get her first room. Had she moved from the nursery, she might have done that.[429] So, they decided to make it another play room. Danny hoped for lots of grandchildren he could pamper.

Tommy – Sept. 28 – A Good Father Figure:

I'd finally met Scott around his birthday, and now his mom announced that we were "going together." I was comfortable with this taking a long while; I was glad to just be a great father figure to him.

D.J.'s motto, she told me when we'd met for that first double date, was "talk it out, work it out, and hug it out" – that matched my idea of family, too. And, it was really what I wanted to help him learn. If his mom and I grew closer, it'd be a great start to being a dad. If we didn't, he'd see us being good friends and know a guy who he could turn to for things; maybe I'd coach a youth team or something, which I'd pondered doing someday when I was a bit older, though I was't the athletic type myself. I could at least help them learn to have fun.

I really hoped we would draw closer, though. Meanwhile, a boy Michelle liked got a little help – some really cute help - to show he liked her.

Stephanie - Oct. 17 - Cute, comical dating story:

Sometimes, the best part of being a big sister was kidding my little one. This was one of those times.

Jeff liked Michelle. He knew that. She knew that. Everyone in their middle school seemed to know the seventh graders made a neat couple.

His younger brothers knew, too. That was the problem.

"Guys," Jeff spouted in his living room, "I don't want to talk to Michelle, okay?!"

Jimmy, five, asked, "If you never talk to her, how will you ask her to the prom?"

"Guys…my senior prom is five…years…away!" he emphasized.

"The fall formal is this Friday, though," seven-year-old Nathan reminded him.

"Well, maybe she's babysitting, or…" He took the phone that nine-year-old Ryan

[429] Which she would have done with an office in the fourth bedroom, as will be seen. Even then, it's not totally clear, though it's likely that she does choose that and let Michelle have the other room.

had handed to him. “What’s this? And, please don‘t say a telephone. This family isn‘t big enough for two world class clowns.”

“It’s not what, it’s who.”

“It’s the first baseman? No, wait, Who’s on first, not It,” Jeff quipped. Once he found out Michelle was on the phone - and that Ryan had called her - he simply told her a joke. It was an old one, he’d told it to her several months back. Then, he hung up.

“You’re scared, aren’t you?”

“Ryan, I am not scared…”

“Does this mean we go to plan B?” Nathan asked.

Jeff glared at Nathan, then at all of them. “Guys, you’re not supposed to have a plan B; you’re not even supposed to have a plan A!”

“Why don’t you ask her? She likes you, too.”

“Yeah, Jimmy, as a friend. But…” Jeff shook his head. “It’s all so confusing to me. When I was younger, I just acted silly so she’d notice me. And, it worked. But, I don’t know what to do now, I don’t know how to just go up to her and ask her out, and even if I did, what would we talk about? We’d be going as a couple, not just as friends. See what I’m trying to say?” He knew their relationship would be different, he just wasn’t sure how to handle that; seventh grade was still a rather timid age when it came to asking someone out to anything, let alone a formal.

“Didn’t you write her a funny poem once about how violets aren’t really blue, so you said ‘roses are red, violets are purple’?” Ryan asked.

“Yes, I did. But, I can’t just spend an hour talking about violets and words that rhyme with blue. It would make for a very strange date.”

“They talk about rhyming words on Sesame Street,” Jimmy noted.

Jeff gave him a look and spoke glibly. “I wouldn’t take a date anyplace where we could be catered by Muppets. What if Grover was our waiter? What a mess.”

Jeff thought of numerous things they had in common that week. He was a real friend. But, when it came to this dance, he was really nervous. He couldn’t just be funny man Jeff, could he? Or, could he? He didn’t know how to approach it.[430]

He longed to be back in first grade, telling jokes every single moment. He’d kind of liked her, but that just meant he liked it when she paid attention to him on the playground. And, even that had waned for a few years, as is normal with kids of that age as they get more joy out of playing and having fun.

When Friday came, Jeff arrived home as usual. He refused to consider going back for the formal, even though most of his friends would be there. He planned to tell his mom he’d baby-sit. He’d almost convinced himself Michelle would be doing the same.

As he began to read to Jimmy, Nathan walked up to him and handed him a Frisbee. “Here you go,” he said casually.

“Here I go what?”

“Hey, Jeff! Randy called and said I should come over,” a familiar voice beckoned cheerfully.

He gulped - it was Michelle, in a lovely flowered sun dress. “Hi. Uh…hi. I said that already, didn’t I?” He grinned sheepishly. “I bet you’re wondering why I have this

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[430] In the book “Once Upon A Mix-up,” Jeff hung around Michelle all the time to rehearse for a play, likely because of a small crush, in the TV Universe when they first act in a play, he’d be a bit older, and more willing to admit he liked her, but that‘s still different than asking one out.

Frisbee. I'm actually getting ready to try and catch it in my mouth."

"Yeah, right."

Randy put a hand on each of their arms and said, "Okay. You can either stay here and my brother can pretend he's a dog, or you can go to the dance." He pulled a piece of paper from his pocket. "Here's a list of things you can talk about. Brothers and sisters. Field trips. Those little tips on the end of shoelaces."

"Aglets," Jeff said tiredly. "What kind of a crazy subject is that, anyway?"

"Well, you told me what they were called once. I asked Stephanie and she said Michelle knew, too."

As Jeff shook his head in disbelief, Michelle comforted him. "It's okay. I was going to come over anyway. When you called and then hung up real fast everyone in my family knew you were trying to get up the nerve to ask me."

Jeff was glad Michelle understood. "I didn't know how to act, what to say…"

"We better go. My dad's waiting outside."

Randy asked if Jeff was going to say thank you. "Yeah, Randy, right after I tickle you guys like crazy. You really wanted me to spend a whole date talking about aglets?!"

"That's okay, Jeff. We've had plenty of fun experiences. Sometimes just sharing memories is so much fun," Michelle remarked.

I'm not as assertive as some girls - but I wouldn't mind acting like Michelle had there. I'd even ask a guy out if I really wanted, and I knew he liked me. It wouldn't be really unladylike, it would just be putting myself in position for a "yes" when he was too shy to ask me. That was definitely the spot Jeff occupied. And, Michelle would have asked him instead, if Jeff's brothers hadn't intervened.

Michelle and he really enjoyed the formal. Meanwhile, I was going with the first of a couple boys I'd go with the during my high school years. Not only had Caleb's experience taught me to find boys I figured I'd like as potential mates better, D.J.'s had, too. I didn't like the thought of going with a guy just because of his looks. Had it not been for Caleb, I likely would have done just what D.J. did through middle school and high school, but I understood more clearly that dating wasn't just about cute couples. It was about going with a prospective mate.

Michelle and Jeff understood that too, Michelle more than Jeff since she was the youngest child. We'd had a series of talks about the purpose of going out with someone. And, she realized that she should think about what a person was like and really analyze things to see if she'd be comfortable with that person.

Jesse – Nov. 9 – High School Games; Not Being Tempted:

Michelle and Jeff even went to a few high school football games with Steph and Gia, though I was the official chaperone. I had no idea what was going on in football, but Danny used that weird logic he sometimes used to explain that that meant I could keep an eye on them more. But, they were never into touchy-feely stuff, they wanted to have fun.

Steph put up with it because she could joke about Michelle called half the players "Jeff" when talking about the game; you knew Michelle had a crush on him. It was fun to see them, and even more rewarding to know they were keeping things safe.

Of course, they liked other sports, too, Steph and Gia even more. They'd go with boyfriends to games quite a bit themselves, while Jeff was content over the years to just play board games with Michelle. Most kids wouldn't be, but Jeff knew when he was in

his early teens if they went to a movie, he might get kicked out for making cracks all the time while people were trying to listen.

Unlike Steph, Michelle kept her core friends in Middle School. That helped her not be tempted by what some are. The friends you hang out with is very important, so there's accountability. Of course, us adults talked with her, but Steph had lots of talks with her about smoking and such, and how she avoided it. Seeing how rough it was on Gia trying to quit was a huge seller, too, as to why she was never even tempted to try.

Becky:

They say girls often end up marrying their dads. Michelle did – Jeff had Joey's comedy, Jesse's sweetness, and Danny's love for good, clean fun; he eventually became a reporter and then a replacement for Danny on the show.

Jesse said they're lucky Gia didn't find someone with Joey's childishness, Danny's obsession with cleaning, and his rebelliousness. Of course, it took her four tries, partly because she didn't know how to pick the right guy. Her daughter felt comfortable with Matt, though, that was the big thing. Kathy knew what she was doing making sure her own was safe above anything.

Michelle and Jeff didn't enjoy watching sports like Steph and Gia, but they did some. That got our boys interested in football, which worried me a little, but they grew pretty fast. Once they got to Junior High I relented and said they could try out, though I wouldn't let them do anything more than play in the yard before then.

It was great to see the girls mature. Now, if only Steph's boyfriend had proposed to her in some funny way – it was so normal, just at a restaurant, whereas Michelle would have one as silly as D.J.'s. But, that's getting ahead of ourselves.

D.J. – Steph's, Michelle's Other High School Activities:

Along with sports, of course, Steph was involved in plenty more fun activities. She and Gia continued to be involved in S.A.D.D., and also helped on the newspaper. However, while I hadn't had time for it, Stephanie was interested in memories, just as Michelle would be, and she ended up working on the yearbook with Gia.

They were active in the sports booster club. They never got on Student Council. However, whereas Kimmy didn't do much unless I helped, Gia did join a couple clubs that Steph didn't, since Steph was in the National Honor Society, as I had been. Kimmy just helped with some of the sports teams during our meetings; Kimmy had never been the kind to do work ahead. They also were active in the church youth group.

Stephanie had a real heart for others. She did even more volunteer work than I did. She sometimes said she wished she had someone to help herself, as a mother figure; but, she knew not to go too fast. She didn't have her first kid till she closer to 30, though she had four herself and adopted two; and, always helped lots of other people..

Michelle kept her athletic interests, and was a reserve on the varsity soccer team in high school. Michelle and Jeff were really active. Michelle loved the yearbook, and worked on it in middle school and high school. She'd learned Dad's love of memories. She'd be Senior Class President, and I think she'd have been if I'd been proactive, too – in fact, she might have been a class president far earlier.

Michelle also did quite a bit of babysitting once she got into high school, and was starting to a little here, with Steph's help mostly. She was ready for the tougher cases in a

few years, which she wouldn't have done otherwise. In her spare time, she and Steph also helped Denise once she started getting into local politics around 2010, though none of us had near the time by then to be campaign managers.

Danny – Finding a special someone:

I was really proud of how my girls had matured. Suzie had even let Michelle be a bridesmaid; she was a bit old to be a flower girl, and Wendy could do that easily. Thankfully, none of them caught the bouquet at Joey's wedding. At least in the old days, that was a sign the person would get married next.

My girls understood a lot about relationships, like Pam and I had. We recognized that relationships aren't supposed to be for show, they're to be entered into because the person is interested in finding a possible mate.

Maybe that's another reason why I didn't date as much as I could have till Vicki came along. I kept asking myself, do I really want this person as a wife. And yet, like Jesse and, to some extent, Joey, I didn't really get to know the person well. Take Stephanie's dance instructor, for instance. She was married by this time. Maybe I would have gotten to accept her and seen how wonderful she was before I saw her apartment was a pig sty, and…well, okay, that's a bad example.

Becky:

It's hard to find that special someone. School and college provide great opportunities to find them. Otherwise, you're on your own. The bar scene's no good, people there are looking for lust, not love. The place where you work can be viable at times, but not all that often. When the person happens to be halfway across the country like Jesse was, it's hard to know how to prepare yourself.

Church is also a very good place to meet someone with similar interests, though that's not the main reason to go. I think the important part is that the two need to be committed to staying together, and that takes time. It took lots of time for Jesse and I, but by this time we loved each other's little quirks. Joey and Suzie were the same way.

I guess when you can't meet the person of your dream yourself, like Jesse, Joey and I, you just have to have faith it'll happen. And, maybe someone will lead you to that place where you can find them.

D.J. - June 12, 1999:

Steve and I were like that, in a way. We'd met in school, but it took Michelle's accident to bring us back together. Well, maybe it would have happened anyway, I don't know. However, I do know that on this day, we began the rest of our lives together.

I'd graduated from college, and now, we were doing it the way Dad and Mom probably should have. However, they'd made it through hard times, and even marrying later than they did, we'd still have that post-honeymoon slump Dad related to us.

We were dedicated to sticking together no matter what because it was the right thing to do. Why else get married unless you're going to stay married? I'd seen so much that pointed toward wholesome, family values being important, I couldn't understand why anyone wanted anything different.

That's why I told Dad there was so much I wanted to do before I married.[431] Now,

[431] "The Apartment"

I'd traveled, done lots of volunteer work, begun a career, and most importantly, I'd been freer my teen years and some of my twenties. I was ready to settle down.

Danny:

I wept as I walked D.J. down the aisle, wondering how I could do it two more times. I kept thinking of Pam and I. I thought of what I'd put D.J. through, and how I made her replace Pam because I felt so inadequate. She'd done super work.

She deserved lots of rewards for putting up with me, with how crazy I was about cleaning, with how I ignored so much and yet was so anxious about her and boys.

Soon, she would be receiving those here on Earth, not just gathering them in Heaven like Pam was enjoying, as we celebrated the start of the next generation.

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3. The Next Generation Begins – Nov. 1999-

D.J. – November 13, 1999:

Life flies by sometimes. I suppose, in the back of my mind, I was ready to have kids. I'd done almost everything I wanted to do, though as a proactive mother figure I'd have gone slower in my twenties when it came to preparing for a family. I'd spent college breaks and summers sightseeing, doing fun things around California like water skiing, and just hanging loose. Most of those things, of course, were done with Steve by my side. I liked the career path I'd chosen, but I was in a hurry.

Possibly, in the back of my mind, I yearned to do it right, too. I hadn't spent the time I should have helping Steph and Michelle early in their lives, I'd been freer. That caused problems the first half decade or more without Mom. Things were good now, but I felt a need to make amends

Becky:

D.J. had had to grow up faster than she'd wanted, and she fought that for years, till the time of the dinosaur when she realized the need to clamp down for a while.

However, the point is, she spent a lot of time with friends, when instead she could have been devoted to family. She seemed more mature at times, but there was an inner struggle that led to her being more emotional and embarrassed than she normally would have been. [432] Just as she tried to distance herself from Steph for fear Danny would make her do more, she tried to distance herself from family. To her credit, she always answered the call. If she'd started off helping a lot, though, it would have been better.

As it was, D.J. and Steve were ready to start a life together, and D.J. was anxious to have a family of her own, after those carefree college years when she did so much volunteering with friends there.

Stephanie – Nov. 13, 1999: D.J.'s Big News:

I was lucky enough to be in on a few big things in D.J.'s life. Hanging out with her showed me just what things would be like for me, in a way. Well, okay, I hoped to be

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[432] She hung out with friends and did lots with family in the 99% of the time we don't see the Tanners on screen. Pressure she'd feel because Danny wouldn't discipline consistently - and yet Michelle behaved much better than if she wouldn't have stepped in, and got a lot better as time went on - makes her feelings very realistic, if a little exaggerated in "Yours, Mine, and Ours," as she worked a lot behind the scenes.

proposed to in a more normal way, but otherwise.

D.J. waited and waited for a call as we celebrated Michelle becoming a teenager yesterday. Today was Saturday, but she knew the doctor's office could call as we helped with Nicky and Alex's party.

Finally, it came – a shriek of joy from the kitchen. I ran into the room, and D.J. declared, "Steph, I'm going to have a baby!"

"A baby! You mean…a real baby?" Steve asked, standing next to us.

Kimmy looked strangely at him. "Could she be having a puppy instead?"

"Why not," I challenged, "you're the one who heard about Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky having twins, and asked how they knew they'd be baseball players, let alone what team would sign them."

"Hey, I was only joking about the team part."

One of Nicky and Alex's friends heard, and instantly ran in to tell the others. D.J. knew she had to call Dad right away. "Hey, Grandpa," D.J. said excitedly. Michelle says he stuttered for a moment, then she lowered him gently to the floor. She got some water for him, and while awakening him guessed right away what had happened.

Danny:

I was ecstatic. And, at the same time, I was beyond nervous. I thought my little girl was too young to have a child, though she was twenty-two. Thankfully, Steph and even Michelle waited longer, though Michelle was only twenty-three. I really wished they would do like in the Bible, though. Why couldn't my girls wait till they were ninety?

D.J. – Pregnant!:

Despite my being in a hurry – though not as much as Dad perceived - it came so quickly. It felt like we'd no sooner opened our wedding gifts. Let me correct that. I began to open the gifts while Steve brought in a plate of food and kept eating. I went through three gifts and cards before he finished. But, just like Uncle Jesse's music, when you love one another, it's not annoying. It's simply a lovable quirk.

We'd had a fabulous honeymoon, celebrating the way all young couples should, having been wholly committed to one another, saving ourselves for that special night. A few months later I learned the exciting news every young couple is forever exhilarated and apprehensive to hear. I was going to be a mother! We'd traveled places and done all the things we could afford for now; it was time to settle down and raise our family.

Stephanie – Reminiscing; D.J. reveals how gentle she'd have been:

Michelle, D.J., and I spent some "woman time" together. Michelle had finished one of her first babysitting assignments outside the family, and D.J. picked her up. We spoke upstairs in the room Michelle now had all to herself.

"Sure a lot of great memories here," D.J. said with a sigh. "At times like this, you think about all you've accomplished – you know, I grew up in this room."

"Yeah, I know." Michelle rubbed D.J.'s belly. "Hey, little girl…or boy…"

"Or Muppet," I joked. We laughed together for a moment.

"Yeah, I wanted to call Nicky and Alex 'Big Bird.'[433] So, do you know?"

D.J. gazed intently at Michelle, envisioning her growing up, picturing her own

[433] "Rock the Cradle"

joyful gift, and the wonderful young lady that baby would become one day. “Don’t tell anyone yet, but…it’s a girl.” At that moment, I sensed something – almost a wistful look. It’s as if she realized that she’d already raised a little girl to some extent, yet recognized she could have, and maybe should have, done so much more.

I hopped off Michelle’s bed, and sat on the couch next to Michelle, opposite D.J.. “You’ve done a great job with this one,” I affirmed.

“We have; I couldn’t have done it without you, Steph.”

Michelle agreed. “You’ve been so nice. Even at my baddest,” she said lowly.

“I bet you think about that with some of the wild kids you might baby-sit. “

D.J. told her, “If a parent tells you it’s okay to spank, I just want you to know, I only would have hurt your feelings.” She discussed how she would have fwapped lightly, and how that should be enough for when Michelle baby-sat.

Michelle was awestruck for a second, and confessed that she planned to ask D.J. about this soon. “I thought you might have, but I never wanted to find out. I didn’t want to hurt anyone,” she remarked. “I can do that, though.”

If she’d been more sensitive, with D.J. having been proactive from the start, Michelle wouldn’t have even wanted to give light fwaps, and would have let one of her friends handle such rough kids; at least till her college years.

“Just make sure they know you care about them,” I advised.

“I will; D.J.’s taught me everything I know,” Michelle declared. She threw her arms around her. “You’re the best, D.J.. You’ve been just like a mother, even though you didn’t always want to be.”

Michelle – Great attitude, determined to lead by example:

I tried to do just like D.J. did – and like she would have. I was willing to babysit some pretty wild ones, but by this time, I was ready for them

A few parents told me to if I felt it necessary, but I never had to give any “fwaps” at this stage. In later high school and college, though, I had a few kids I watched regularly for a few years, where the young parents gave me permission. I’d told them how I did it, and they tried to do the same so it was consistent. It only needed done a few times. It was really hard for me, though they only remembered me hurting their feelings. I reminded myself D.J. felt the same, though; these kids were just wilder than I’d been, so a handful of times they didn’t listen and got one of my light “spankings.”

Most importantly, the kids knew I loved them, even if I had to get tough. They loved having me as a sitter, and they turned out great, too. And, they loved to hear stories of when D.J. had to punish me; thankfully they never pulled some of the worst stuff I did. One even said that line D.J. recalled from the funnies once – “Miss Michelle won’t hurt your bottom; just your heart.”

I’m still amazed D.J. was so tender and loving. Thankfully, I’d never even have to threaten to be that tough with my kids. Mom had been lucky – she never had to deal with kids that wild when she babysat in college.

D.J.:

Back to that time of reminiscing, I knew Michelle respected me a lot. “I know you see me as your final authority, but leave some credit for Dad, okay? He’s had it rough since Mom died,” I said with a dose of pity in my voice. Michelle agreed. “I

certainly don't envy him. Steve and I have talked about it – not only am I going to be proactive, so will he, so we never have to worry about serious rebellion; and Steve won't have problems if I would die."

Thankfully, they never would have such problems.

Stephanie's mind was on one thing, but she figured she knew the answer. "What's her name? Are you,…" She got choked up a little. "…gonna name her after Mom?"

"Of course." We got very quiet, thinking about the wonderful mother we missed or, in Michelle's case, never knew. "The name's been on all our hearts for a long, long time." We shared a group hug, pondering how we'd grown up without her, and achieved so much; knowing she was proud, but wishing she could be here to say it all the same.

Steve:

The name was going to be Pam. Whichever one of Mr. Tanner's girls had a baby first, if it was a girl, it had to be. I knew that going into this.

I didn't mind. D.J. let me pick a middle name, and she didn't even consider Farrah. Although, oddly, that might not have gone badly as a middle name with Pamela. She thought I was nuts for saying so, but they had the similar "-ah" sound.

Stephanie might have chosen the longer "Pamela" to name a girl, but D.J. preferred Pam, or Pammy, as we would call her. Well, except when she was naughty, then it would be her full name, Pamela Elizabeth Hale.

Jesse – Mar. 15, 2000 – Advising Steph on Commitment:

Withoug something to draw her attention, Steph worried about how she was going to commit to a relationship. She'd had a courtship with that one kid, but that was so controlled and chaperoned it made her feel comfortable because someone else held the reins, in a way. She was really afraid of something bad happening.

I told her the key was to do something so she didn't have time to worry about it – like for instance, you shouldn't marry a guy afte rknowing him for only a few months, but once you've developed a friendship, and you're real close, if he proposes, say "yes" right away. And, then marry after a couple months.

Okay, it might not have been the brightest thing to say; I guess it's different if you're talking about getting back on a horse after you fall off.

Stephanie:

Uncle Jesse's heart was in the right place, at least. When I did finally meet a guy, I would have waited a few years to marry anyway, even without that. Indeed, had I been helping someone proactively as a mother figure, I might have waited even longer, figuring I already had my special relationship – but as a mom.

Or, would I? That might have helped, actually. You see, I was already helped seeing D.J. and Steve together and happy. I wasn't off doing stuff that would have caused me to travel all around and therefore not have the chance for a stready bond – while at the same time not even having as close of a bond with my family. Instread, I was here, reminded that there was no place like home.

Joey - Apr. 4, 2000 - Another Pam enters the world:

D.J.'s girl was beautiful. Her birth story was a beauty, too.

Suzie gave birth to a baby boy two days earlier. D.J. went into false labor pains at the time - we'd always joked that we might end up having them at the same time.

Naming was easy for me. Suzie didn't like the name Dolly as much, and so we decided early in the pregnancy to name the child Robin. Robin Williams was a fantastic comedian, one who I really admired. It would also make a very pretty name for a girl.

Nicky and Alex:

Joey said to get from Robyn to a boy spelling, you just had to change the y to I. We wondered why he didn't add "-es" as well. That's what you normally do when you change a "y" to an "i."

Seriously, it was great to have more kids in the family. After some struggles, Melanie was doing very well, and our parents talked about adopting again, though this one would be younger. They ended up adopting a girl named Tatiana in 2002; she was a year and a half old when they adopted her. They adopted an even younger girl in the middle of the next decade whom they named Pamela.

Cousin D.J. had always lamented not having cousins around, especially ones her age. With Joey's marriage, Michelle, and now D.J.'s kids, our family would suddenly have a whole bunch of cousins. Of course, Joey wasn't technically an uncle, but we called him that sometimes. He was as close as one, anyway.

Because Joey and Suzie were busy with their newborn, somebody had to be there in the afternoon for Melanie, who went to half-day Kindergarten. Our dad was filling in during the early afternoon time slot on the radio, and of course Mom and Uncle Danny had their show and stayed at the studio to work for a while after that..

You guessed it - that somebody was D.J. and Steve. D.J. was in some pain, but she insisted on hiding it. She'd always tried so hard to help others while ignoring her own problems. This time, it would not be the smartest thing.

Steve – D.J. Goes Into Labor:

I tried to find some sitters by about three in the afternoon; I could tell D.J. was going into labor. She could tell, too. However, nobody was around. Joey and Suzie were coming home from the hospital today, and the others were all either at school, at work, or on vacation. Nick and Irene went down to Palm Springs for much of the year now, since Nick sold me his extermination business.

Finally, I called Kimmy at the salon where she worked. She arrived after finishing a customer, and immediately said something dumb even by her standards.

D.J. was lying in the bathroom in obvious pain. As Melanie led Kimmy into the bathroom. D.J. let out a huge scream as a contraction hit.

Just after that scream, Kimmy asked, "Deej, are you okay?"

D.J.:

"I'm having a baby!" I screamed as I squeezed Steve's hand.

"Wow. This is just like when Comet and his siblings were born in your uncle's bed," Kimmy remarked.

"Kimmy, you may be overcoming your disorder," I said quite bluntly, as I felt ready to give birth that second. "But, it's obvious you still don't like to think."

"That's true," she confessed.

"I called 911. There's an ambulance coming. The lady wants to talk to you," Melanie reported. Steve left to pick up the phone and give details. Melanie had called just before Kimmy got there, so the dispatcher hadn't been waiting long, less than half a minute, probably.

"Thanks, Melanie," I said proudly. "Kimmy, let everyone know where I am when Nicky and Alex get home."

"Sure thing, Deej. I'll wait here till their folks get home."

"How did that baby got in her?" Melanie entreated Kimmy.

Kimmy smirked. "Sorry, kid. Even I'm not dumb enough to start to answer that one. You'll have to ask your parents."

Melanie shrugged. "It was worth a try."

I had to admit, at her age, with a sitter like Kimmy, I would have tried that, too.

Joey:

The funny thing is, as we were driving home from the hospital with Robin, an ambulance passed us. We could tell it was turning toward the hospital. "Wouldn't it be crazy if that was D.J.?" Suzie said with a laugh.

"I don't think many comedians would try that - it's too much of a coincidence," I said absently as I focused on the road. However, truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. We figured out, from the time, that it had to be her.

Becky:

We were so proud of Melanie - she'd really come a long way in the last few years. It takes someone with a cool head to call 911, especially when they're not quite six years old. Of course, all she really had to say was her name and address, and that her babysitter was having a baby. Dispatchers are trained to know what to do. Most kids that age, with enough practice, can do that, and Danny certainly helped with the practice part. Still, I don't think she could have done that a couple years earlier.

When you surround kids with love, warmth, and encouragement, though, even if you have to be pretty tough, they're generally going to turn out really good. And, Melanie certainly did.

Nicky and Alex:

Pammy was born at 9:00 that evening.

Uncle Danny took the call as we all waited at our house, and proclaimed, "Today, the next generation of the Tanners officially begins." He couldn't believe he was a grandfather at only 42 years old.

Joey came over to watch Melanie the next day till our mom got home. He still did the radio show with our dad, but Dad wanted to go into the morning drive time.

We hadn't been sure who would be there. Now that D.J. and Suzie had had their babies, each of them could get us off to school if Dad and Joey started to do their shows in the morning. D.J. was preferable, as Suzie had her own older kids.

Jesse: - Fri. Apr. 30 – Finally to the best spot – Morning Drive Time:

Joey and I loved the afternoon show. However, I longed to be a morning drive time deejay. That's where the real popularity and pay and ratings are. They liked me

because I wanted to stay where my family was. They knew I wouldn't bounce all over the map. However, that also meant they wanted to push me to go to the morning rush hour time slot, so they could have someone remain established there for a couple decades. They still weren't bad in the ratings, though they were a bit worried; they figured this would be the key to improving, since what I saw as good, clean rock was now "oldies." It did help them quite a bit for a while.

I'd balked at first, because of family obligations. Joey and I each liked being there for the kids, especially me since Becky worked in the morning, too. The station owners understood - they owned both our radio station and the TV station. Still, they wouldn't dare move Danny and Becky to the afternoon; they figured "Good Afternoon, San Francisco" would get clobbered in the ratings by soaps or Oprah.

So, today, they came to me again. I'd explained earlier - and they understood for the time being - that these pregnancies had to get out of the way first. Today, however, our boss said, flat out, "You've got D.J. to help get your kids off to school and watch them in the summer now. You guys are a big hit; we really need you for the morning drive time." I couldn't disagree with him.

Danny – A new dog:

Comet had passed away last winter - ten was good for a dog his size, though we probably gave him too many table scraps at times. Still, he was very good, and after enough training, only got out once or twice. He came back quickly, though.

With D.J. being pregnant, Steph's senior year, prom, graduation, Steph starting college, our house didn't try to get one right away. Joey had a family retriever named Prancer by this time, anyway. However, Michelle really wanted one of her own, since her hamster had died a year before, so this summer, I promised we'd get another Golden.

D.J. and Steve planned to get a dog in another couple years, though, and Steve named it Dasher when they did. Joey often joked afterward that we were trying to cover all of Santa's reindeer names. He inquired about what would happen when we ran out. None of us could figure out how to answer that one.

Stephanie – Steph's prom, Steph's and other college plans:

As I prepared for my senior prom, it seemed like my current boyfriend and I had hit a plateau in our relationship. It felt like D.J. and Steve probably had a month or so before they broke up the first time, back in early 1994. Honestly, I was glad to be going with this fellow, but my experience with Caleb had taught me to analyze things much better. I felt it just wasn't going to be quite as satisfying as it could be.

Tomorrow night was wonderful anyway, though. It was still incredibly romantic, and a great chance to allow the passion to return. It did, but only a little. I would have to wait till college to meet my future mate; and, there I would.

As for which college? I'd managed to do so well, and they were so impressed with my experience and other stuff, I got placed on the wait list for Stanford. That was better than D.J.. If enough people declined, because Stanford wasn't their first choice and they got in somewhere else, then I could go.

I never got off the wait list, however. So, I went to San Francisco State, with a major in Journalism and a minor in Education. While I would have my own show on the radio in college, my focus was print media. I wanted to be a full-time mother and write

free lance articles and such, carving a niche where I didn't have to worry about attacking others but merely helping others with interesting articles in magazines or newspapers, till I had kids. I just didn't want to have to travel all over.

Michelle would eventually go there, as well, and go into education. She'd be following Gia in that pursuit.

Gia and I went to college together, and Gia set her sights on being a preschool or Kindergarten teacher, or having a home daycare. In a few years, we'd all tease her that one day she'd have to return and we could have a reality series called "Welcome Back, Mahan." Uncle Jesse joked that considering how much he was like a Sweathog - not a totally rough character, but definitely a rebel who didn't care for school - having something like "Welcome Back, Kotter" in my circle of friends would be great.

It turned out she'd forego tht to be a soccer mom and other things; cbut, D.J. had changed her major, so it sort of figured. It's hard to know just want you want to do; I knew I had some good book ideas to help people like her, and that Sam Karen had adopted, and many others.

Becky – Aug. 15, 2000 – Growing Up Fast, and D.J.'s Victory:

Michelle smiled and cooed back at D.J.'s little girl as she cradled her and rocked her in her arms. "It's still amazing how little they are."

"She's growing fast." D.J. sat beside Michelle on the couch, and placed an arm around her. "Like someone else special I know."

"Oh, D.J.. You always say that."

"Well, it's true. First with college, then moving out, I haven't had to worry about you at all. You obey Dad's curfew and other rules; you're very respectful to him and everyone else. I'm proud of you."

Michelle looked at Pammy. "Your grandpa's not as bad as he could be with curfews. He's great, especially with how hard it was after Mom died. I can come to your mommy with anything. And the rules I don't like, if I didn't obey. Your mommy would be soooo mad at me." She chuckled under her breath and said, "If every kid had a big sister like your mom, Pammy, there wouldn't be near the problems. I still can't believe she'd have been that merciful to me way back then. You've got the best Mommy in the world, Pammy," Michelle finished lovingly.

D.J. shrugged, but beamed on the inside. "It was my job. I didn't want it, but I tried to be the best, so you'd turn out okay." She took the baby over to the changing table. "Having Pammy, it really makes me wish I'd taken on those duties more, on my own. That's when I really would have been the best. You still turned out great, though."

"Thanks." Michelle offered to change the diaper, and D.J. let her.

"I can't help but be amazed. I still remember when Dr. Landress said you were always going to see me as the ultimate authority. It blew my mind; I was worried. Still, you learned to obey Dad pretty well. It hasn't turned out too bad, I guess."

"When you did punish me, you always did what you said you would. And, you spent enough time with me, I knew I could count on you to love me, no matter what." Michelle smiled broadly. "By the way, Jeff and I had our first kiss the other day."

"Oh boy! What did Dad say?"

"He was anxious, as usual." She finished changing Pammy, and picked her up. "But, don't worry. I wouldn't dream of going to some make out party or anything. We

both want to take it nice and easy, and not rush things."

"Because you think about what I'd say?"

"No, just because…well, maybe a little. But, you guys have always talked about doing the right thing. I really want to, also, no matter what other kids are doing. I can't imagine wanting to do some of the stuff they do. It's crazy."

Michelle put Pammy in her crib for a nap. D.J. skipped down to the washer to check on a load. Then, she shouted "Yesss!!" as she pumped her fist in the air.

She uttered a prayer of thanks. Michelle was making good, right, moral decisions, and not just because of D.J.'s reaction if she didn't. Her work was done – no more worrying about Michelle being rebellious. We hadn't had to for the last five years, really, but there was always a shadow of doubt. Now, it was certain she'd be okay.

Danny – No More Rebellion:

My sadness over losing Pam had stopped causing problems, as Michelle never rebelled as a teen. With her constant monitoring, D.J. had really helped Michelle to see how much fun it was to follow rules. She grew more and more, and by now, she was a natural leader. I could have handled things a lot better earlier, putting a stop to things in a much calmer way than D.J. had to do, but what resulted was still wonderful.

Jesse – Sat., Sept. 18, 2000 – Next reunion:

Like last time, our class went to a Friday football game. Then, Becky and I attended the class reunion tonight. We hadn't had a 15th because it was an off year and it was figured few would come, but a lot showed for this one. Everyone was amazed to see me not only happily married, but with several kids. Michelle did great babysitting.

I didn't think about old girlfriends, though it was interesting to see where several wound up; what most people wanted to hear about was my owning the Smash Club. They were amazed what I'd done with it; we actually had a small group there after the game on Friday. They didn't mind the comedy emphasis, they still loved it. Not everyone was crazy about rock and roll after all these years, we were close to 40.

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Tommy – Nov. 27, 2000 – Proposing to Kathy:

We'd taken it slow, just like she'd hoped, but I couldn't wait. Thanksgiving was the perfect time, as we talked alone tht night at her parents'.

She said "yes," I was so thrilled. I called everyone I knew. The funny part was, I tried to call Steve to thank him, and the line was busy because Kathy had called D.J.; with cell phones becoming popular that wouldn't happen much anymore.

We married that summer; it was a really small wedding, but the important thing was, we would be starting a family. And, by the time I died in the line of duty, her boy was a great father figure to the kids left behind.

She'd have some unexpected help, too.

Kimmy – Dec. 5, 2000 – Love At First Sight:

Duane and I had fallen out of love after a whie. Had D.J. been more proactive, I'd have gotten the hang of this relationship stuff earlier. Maybe we'd have both helped Duane and he could have been a motivational speaker without having to go to Harvard and take who kknew how many eyars.

Insterad, there was this cool race car driver named Fernando. He and I hit it off really well, and it was maybe a month later I covceived.

Ramona:

Okay, this is getting a bit embarrassing; maybe I'd better take over.

Remember I said we'd have someone to help? I have to deal with a lot of stuff with my parents fighting like they did, but I loved D.J. so much! She was always there to talk to, with Fernando out on the racing circuit.

It wasn't the best thing for Mom, D.J. had warned her about a few things, and Becky had warned her about more. But, there are some things Mom had outgrown.

This was a far cry from when she used some money from my great-Grandpa Gibbler to try and get dates with an 800 number and advertised on cable one night, before some clever person noticed she was only a minor.[434] Not that she would have gotten anyone with her very strange ad. Mom told them they could massage her feet, but they'd have to wear gas masks. Her ad and number were quickly pulled off the air. A lot of people thought it was a spoof, at least.

Anyway, thankfully D.J. always told me I wasn't a mistake. Like Scott, I knew I was a blessing; I had a purpose on Earth. That's how I got to help him.

See, once Papa went back to the racing circuit, Kimmy had to call and let him know she was pregnant; they married two weeks before I was born. It was thrown together really fast, and in some ways helped Kimmy solidify how she was going to put together her party-planning business. He was racing quite a bit, and Kimmy found herself getting involved in the same group Kathy had used for single parents, or parents where the father was mostly absent, anyway.

D.J. - Mon. Dec. 6, 2000:

I was super proud of Gia, too; we all were. Her marriages would fall apart, unlike Kimmy's where it just slowly died, but Gia was, at least, doing well and would become a good soccer mom, anyway. Stephanie had seen that potential, and Gia would become a much beloved worker. Michelle probably would have noticed it first, if not for the fact Gia treated her like a really little kid when she was already seven.

"Wake Up, San Francisco" moved a bit later in the morning, to 9:00, so Aunt Becky could get the kids off to school then leave for the show. It would have been too much trouble for me carting an infant over just to get kids off to school.

However, in the summer months, starting in 2001, Pammy and I spent a lot of time with our cousins, Nicky, Alex, and Melanie. With Steph and Michelle out of school, as well as Suzie's older kids, I saw my little girl and my cousins having the fun-filled summers with cousins of all ages that I never experienced. Many parents dream of giving their children the great things that they lacked. Thankfully, I was able to do just that for my little one, at least in this area. I'd never lacked much otherwise.

Uncle Jesse and Joey's radio show sent them to a ski resort to promote their winter ski packages this week, which meant I was a little busier helping both families. But, at least that meant Pammy got to see just how wonderful it was to help others. I know, she was only a baby, but I honestly think they notice the things their parents do, even if they don't understand it, at a very young age.

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[434] "Trouble In Twin Town"

Jesse:

Joey and I got stuck in the snow, that's why D.J. was so busy. An early, heavy snow left us trapped together. I couldn't help but tease Joey, and get a little frustrated at him, though we easily laughed about it.

First of all, he looked at the wrong weather forecast before coming up here - I kept thinking we were going to be stranded fifteen years like they were on Gilligan's Island. Then, he had brought some comical tapes that he insisted on playing, such as chickens clucking "In The Mood."

Joey:

Jesse really knew how to have fun by now, though. And, he figured at least his kids would have a blast listening to us, which they did.

I think the worst part was when I told him we were snowed in - I was instantly reminded of a cartoon where Sylvester's family leaves and he says, "They forgot to put out the cat." Then, he says fearfully, "Wait a minute. I'm the cat!" Of course, I had to do the voice when I told him that.

Nicky and Alex:

Eventually, Mom semi-retired for a little while, she was off her show for about half a year when we adopted another child, a girl named Tatiana. The Smash Club was doing well enough she could afford to do that.

We had plenty of sitters around, which made the people at the agency very happy. They knew our new brother would be surrounded with love. Being snowed in and doing the show like that got them some more publicity. After a few more comedy acts, and another show in Vegas, Joey got the ultimate call.

Joey - Thu., Dec. 30, 2000 – Finally Fulfilling A Dream:

The best comedians got bookings on New Year's Eve. This was sort of like Jesse's booking opening two days before Aerosmith years ago. Still, it was a booking.

I'd played various comedy clubs throughout the country in the year and a half or so after Michelle's recovery.[435] Part of that was because touring took my mind off worrying about whether or not I'd be able to get together for good with Suzie. However, part was because I truly wanted to see if I could make it. I'd asked my agent to keep me close to home before, but this time, I sensed it was now or never.

Danny:

Joey hadn't tried "Star Search" before we did it for him. Similarly he'd never contacted the Tonight Show people. I suspect he didn't fully realize how much work he could do on his own; he thought he had to be discovered by talent scouts. Then, following his opening for Wayne Newton, he faced the disappointment of having his TV show cancelled before it began. He got other jobs, and he just didn't try really hard.

Jesse:

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[435] Numerous books mention Joey traveling to these. This is a likely path on TV, too. He'd want to give it one last push with Danny's girls getting older and him not being needed quite as much as earlier.

I really cared for Joey like a brother. An annoying kid brother at times, but a brother nonetheless. I'd sent a tape the first time to Jay Leno late in '95. All we got was a form letter. By 1998, when Joey got married and slowed down his comedy appearances immensely, we were up to the finest form letter there is. In essence, it said, "Joey Gladstone sounds like a very entertaining person, just like many others around the country. We may consider him at some point in the future." Which means, they'd look if something really intriguing or funny forced them.

After being forced to do our shows for almost a week in the snowed in mountains, though, I hoped and prayed this was it. A combination of great timing - they had a slot for a comedian open on January 10, 2001 - and the comical circumstances and funny things we'd done on those broadcasts to fill time - earned Joey an invitation.

The only problem was, when he got back from his booking New Years' Eve, he kept hugging me.

Joey - Wed., Jan. 12, 2001 – Making Jay Leno:

Suzie, the rest of the family, and I just got back from Los Angeles. Almost everyone was able to make it to my appearance on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno. I hadn't made it with Johnny or Ed McMahon, and it took a while even with Jesse hounding them. However, I'd achieved my dream.

Everyone was incredibly happy for me. Jay was super, too. I did my Wizard of Oz bit, some Popeye, and a few other jokes and impressions, and they showed my whole extended family in the audience. I sat down and chatted with Jay about that family, about that wild adventure in the snow, and other things.

I really wished my dad could have been there, but he passed away soon after we reconciled. He had the satisfaction of seeing me, though, and feeling proud of me, and I had the joy of knowing he was proud. So, everything worked out.

In the end, as we said goodbye, I knew my career as a standup comedian probably wouldn't go a whole lot further. However, I'd realized my greatest dream, over ten years after my original deadline had passed.

I didn't exactly announce my retirement on the Tonight Show, though I hinted I'd be slowing down considerably. The thing I stressed the most was that I was so glad I'd never given up on that dream.

Jesse – Sat., Feb. 26 – Teddy Bear Troubles:

Last Friday, my boys came home super-excited to do homework after Steph and Michelle had taken them and Melanie to the mall. Stephanie was volunteering at a local hospital passing out candy and flowers and stuff to patients, and thought the boys would enjoy helping. I'd already taken them to the soup kitchen a couple months earlier for Christmas, and we all wanted to keep them interesting in volunteering like that.

Well, it turned out they ordered a stuffed teddy bear online. You got one free with the first order, but they thought all the bears were free, and you could order as many as you wanted; they ended up ordering about thirty!

They gave the first to their younger sister, of course – adopting her was one other way we'd really taught them about helping those less fortunate – and then they kept getting bears for all their friends. Tatiana hadn't been adopted yet. Then, they tried to give them back. Finally, they had to donate the last ones to the hospital, and I was able to

use it as a tax writeoff, so I wasn't too concerned. Still, Becky and I – and Stephanie – had a talk with them about reading the fine print in stuff like that. [436]

They never got in trouble like that again – actually, the only reason they tried that was because they figured it was okay since it didn't ask for a credit card. Most places ask for one now, but in the days when buying over the Internet was still kind of new, some places just sent you the bill along with the stuff. Oh, and Melanie was wiling to give up her bear, too, in the end, when her brothers said they might get in trouble. She was learning how to think of them, too. We let her keep it, though, especially since she was so good about being willing to give it back.

Nicky and Alex:

Mom and Dad were always really nice when we made little slip-ups like that.

Yeah. We never would have tried to use a credit card, but we really did think those bears were free.

The craziest part was when we gave that bear to Melanie, then asked her to hide it the next day when we got that first big shipment and the bigger bill! The look on her face was priceless. And her, "Are you nuts?" was just like Michelle.

She did, though. She really cared about helping others. Mom and Dad just told her next time, if we ask her to hide something, she had to tell them about it, and she listened.

Becky – May, 2001:

Our boys got along pretty well, but they got into a few little things like with the teddy bears, innocent stuff that was more their not understanding things than anything. Still, they had their battles, too.

This month, they had one of their strangest disagreements. They liked to do Abbott and Costello stuff, and tended to get a little picky over things and laugh like fools because of it. Still, they got along well, even if that meant they didn't always talk about their problems with each other. This took the cake, though.

Each read about a person complaining about a sibling in an online advice column. We'd let them back on the computer without us in the room last month, though of course it was in a part of the house that was in plain sight of everyone. And, I'd reminded them people sometimes hide their real identities online.

So, what did they do? They each thought the person was complaining about a brother, even though it was a sister. That led to them each thinking the other had written the complaints, even though it was two sisters, and the people writing had even said they were sisters. The boys then tried to follow the advice, one being super nice, the other trying to keep his distance to give the one some freedom.

Finally, Alex went to Michelle for advice. She gave him money to buy Nicky and some friends a pizza as a goodwill gesture, and the boys started communicating and made up. But, they really reached a new high in weirdness with that one.[437]

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[436] "Too Many Teddies," a Michelle and Friends book, is too futuristic, given the technology in 1995-6, to have happened when Michelle was in fourth grade. Companies didn't put websites on products or regularly sell online. Like the Sisters book mentioned after this, because it's still good, it's deemed best to place it here. It's likely canon for Nicky and Alex in both universes, then. This also helps with confusion about whether Michelle could use the computer in the office – she couldn't in an earlier book. Here, it's assumed Jesse, being more lax, would let the boys use his for short intervals.

[437] "Ask Miss Know-It-All" – A comical series of misunderstandings that should be considered Nicky and

Kimmy – December, 2001:

It was great having Fernando back; he was usually here for a few months at a time. Ramona loved him, but she spent a lot of time over at D.J. and Steve's especially because she had their girl to play with. She developed a bit of a rivalry with her, but it was still lots of fun, and they got along okay, really. I think part of that was because they were both girls, and once we helped them work it out, it was easier than it would be if there had been a girl and a boy.

Tommy:

Scott was playing youth sports by now, and I did coach him when I could. Kathy and I were ready to have a couple more kids.

Kathy was starting to be the one helping others now. She had always kept in touch with Kimmy – that's how D.J. would keep tabs, since she kind of still wanted to help even at the worst times. And, Kathy would use Kimmy's party planning business as it was starting to sprout up. She would also give her tips and ideas on dealing with a baby by herself. Yeah, D.J. did most of that, but Kathy was always willing to help.

Max:

I know; we wouldn't be the exact same people here. But, suspend your disbelief for a moment. Because, we still have the same dad, and with the help Kathy got, we would be pretty similar. They werne't married yet, but they soon would be It was a somewhat different environment, but the same great dad.

Jackson:

See, teen moms can be just as great a parents as any other, and often want to be. They just need extra help to overcome all their obstacles. Kathy Santoni got that help. Do al make it? No, and there are a lot of different reasons for this; some having to do with their environment, some their support, and some just the fact they aren't interested, or they become disillusioned by what they thought would fulfill them.

If you remember, Kathy Santoni was finding all these places where, well, you know, in seventh grade. Sure, she'd probably changed a lot that summer, but those interests didn't ust happen overnight. But, she'd been in counseling about some things before then, and having scott woke her up a lot. She didn't know if she'd make it, but she was one of those who became a real success.

Steve:

I sometimes wondered if I could have become a doctor, but not much. My science grades had been good, but I loved exterminating work, and there was no reason for me to ask myself if I would have gladly gone to medical school for four years after four years of college, and then all that residency. I saw how D.J. toiled as a nurse sometimes. It was great to still have her sisters to baby-sit.

Without the family drifting apart, Nicky and Alex also had more encouragement to excel, although part of that was in food – just not opening a food truck. They were

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Alex's, because in early 1996 there weren't online advice columns like in 2001, and there wasn't room anyway in that part of the timeline with Michelle and Stephanie.

more interested in restaurants, and while use guys all loved Uncle Monty's we knew he'd be retiring sometime in the next 10-15 years. Maybe they'd be buying it.

I didn't have the money or time to help once it did happen, but Fernando and Jimmy wound up buying it with their help, and there became a team effort with the Samsh Club, which they ran since Jesse never sold it.

Stephanie – Spring, 2002 - Another comedian in the family:

Jeff dreamed of comedy, too. Michelle joked that she didn't know what she would have done in his class, with all the jokes he told and pulled in grade school. Still, he was a joy to be around. He was quite willing to let his sweet side show, though he had a knack for entertaining. He succeeded Dad on "Wake Up, San Francisco." He did a variety of things at the station before, as an intern and after graduation.

Best of all. he treated Michelle like a queen. By this time, she would never take advantage of special treatment. All girls should be treated great by boys, but some take advantage of it, whereas Michelle knew it was just as important to give back and be grateful for the love he showed. I had only just met the guy who I'd marry some six years later. But, I knew what was important, too, in a relationship.

Though we'd never been as heavily into our faith – even with D.J. more dedicated we wouldn't have been that much – we still enjoyed it, and were glad Jeff was getting into it, too, and knew the Lord and had a personal relationship with Him. I sure needed it with all I was going througha as I struggled with commitment with guys. Like Michelle, he was great with little kids.

He and Michelle were quite active in a youth group, much more so than D.J. had been. She'd had so many things pulling her different directions. I got into it sooner because of Caleb, though I would have anyway, with Michelle's accident and being so thankful she was okay. I'd have still gotten really involved in high school.

Michelle and Jeff helped on our one church bus sometimes, too. It was a long route at times, with ours near to the last stop. He made up the following parody about that. The tune, of course, is the theme from "The Flintstones":

Church bus, ride our church bus, come and see all of our great country.
We pick up in San Fran, and go all the way to Germany.
We just never know who we will meet,
As we stop on every single street.
When you're on our church bus,
You'll have a really Godly good time, a Godly good time, for such a long, long time.
Church bus, ride our church bus, come and see all of our great country.
Next week, we'll be early, we got new pickups on Mercury.
We love bringing people to the Light,
Though we don't get back till Friday night.
When you're on our church bus,
You'll have a really godly good time, a Godly good time, for such a long, long time.

Danny – Nov. 2002 – Bo McIntyre, Former Guest, Now Governor-Elect:

I was so thrilled when the election results came in. We'd had representatives and such before, but never a chief executive – or former one – at the state or federal level. But, now we could say at least we had had a future one.

Here's what happened. McIntyre was a former star quarterback, whose legendary play in place of the injured starter led his team to the AP national title in the late 1970s. He became a brain surgeon; injuries and talent questions kept him from the pros.[438]

He finished his residency in 1992, while his wife practiced law; she was a couple years older than him. Ironically, one of the ladies I might have hired as a nanny wound up working for them when they had a child in 1994.

We told you in 1990 he planned to enter politics, which he announced on "Wake Up, San Francisco." He was from a poor part of Los Angeles, got into Stanford Medical School - very hard to do - and catered to common people. He never followed those who catered to the loudest voices. His slogan is, "Revive common sense."

He's independent like Virginia's Douglas Wilder, who leans Democrat. But, some Democrats are so far left in California, McIntyre leans Republican.

You have to be with a party to win in most states. McIntyre was in the State Senate by 2000 as a Republican. Governor Gray Davis, a Democrat, was very unpopular. Still, he couldn't have been beaten in a party primary, so McIntyre stayed Republican. Davis knocked out a few Republican frontrunners with ads. McIntyre was nominated over William Simon, conservative but from out of state, as a moderate was deemed more likely to be able to win the election. Davis, a Democrat, hadn't attacked McIntyre in the primaries because he was under the radar, so to speak.

In the general election, McIntyre won a close vote. He would go on to win re-election and protect a lot of conservative interests, such as homeschooling, while charting a moderate course economically and socially, so, as he said, "Rules won't be made by those who happen to be loudest."

We had him on our program several days after he won, just as we'd had him one other time in the late 1990s. He actually remembered us. I was flattered.

Michelle - Sept., 2003 – Senior Class President:

Today, I raced over to D.J.'s and Steve's after school.

"I won!" I shrieked. I was the Senior Class President.

D.J. twirled me around a little, and I could tell she was as proud as she could be. "That's even better than my news!" she exclaimed.

"Are you pregnant again?!"

"Not yet. Steve's going to be able to own the business outright by July of 2005," D.J. told me. "And, he gets to change the name, too." D.J. said Nick was sad, but happy that at least it was in the family. After all, as she concluded, "If I'd been a boy, I might be the exterminator, and I'd be a Tanner, not a Katsopolis."

"I'm glad he's taking it so well."

"Yeah. It's funny, though, Uncle Jesse's a little disappointed about it."

I was a little surprised. "Why?"

"He and Grandpa are finally communicating well. It took a long time, but he always had deep feelings for Grandpa. It's just that Uncle Jesse hid them so much. He always shown some fruit, but he's finally getting serious about maturing spiritually and not being so prideful." D.J. put an arm around me as we walked out to the back yard,

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[438] "Honey, I Broke the House" – all quite plausible to explain his rise in a timeline similar to ours. The 2002 election was like what's shown, except Davis beat Simon since Simon was unpopular and an outsider. Davis lost a recall election months later, in 2003. See earlier footnote for more on why McIntyre's here.

where Pammy played happily as we talked. “I’m glad you’ve developed into such a sweet young lady, and didn’t keep any of those negative traits.”

I concurred. We discussed all that I’d accomplished, and all the fun stuff that laid ahead. Jeff and I were going steady, and better than ever. It seemed like I’d be one of those lucky enough to meet their future mate in grade school. We already had plans to double date with Teddy and Denise to the prom.

Pammy started to get defiant - she was running with a sharp stick despite her mom telling her not to do that. I called her over, then just picked her up and sat her on my lap. We had one of those “famous talks” with her about how she should behave. She was super; she didn’t test any more than any good child would.

“You sure have kept the positive ones, though,” D.J. complimented me. “You are going to make a super mother someday.”

“Thanks. I already have lots of ideas about improving things as president. You acting as president while Kimmy was class president is still talked about there.”

D.J. smiled as she reminisced. “I still remember the yearbook that year - it said, ‘The Gibbler presidency was beyond words, and the stories should simply be passed on orally. Any attempt to describe the events in this short space would fail.’ Which was a polite way of saying it was too crazy to be believed sometimes, and it was best not to embarrass her further.” We laughed. “I got her through, though.”

I finally let Pammy off my lap since she was being quiet; I readily enforced rules with her. “I’m glad I’ve had people to help like that; and a great sister to help me.”

D.J.:

I may not have been as involved as I should have been. I’d reacted as I felt I had to, though, when major problems arose. And, now the rebellious part of Uncle Jesse was gone from her. We had a marvelous young lady in Michelle, who’d really do great things.

And yet, there was still that sweet part of him that she’d retained. Just before I had to take Pammy inside and sit her in the corner because of her defiance, Michelle calmly scooped her up, gave her a stern yet loving look, and held her on her lap as she corrected her and reminded her to listen to me.

I could just picture Michelle on our Uncle Jesse’s lap, having one of those “famous talks” with him. Of course, Pammy would always listen to Michelle, because unlike Uncle Jesse, when Michelle babysat, she enforced timeout and removed any privilege that might need removed, though she didn’t lose too many.

Michelle’s right, I’d done a fine job. I might have been able to do more, but I’d done enough. At least Kimmy had that same saving grace we did, and would be perfect on the other side in Glory. For now, I just helped her however I could on Earth.

Joey – Feb., 2004 – How It Felt to Do “Oldies”:

We’d done a great mix of music, comedy, weather, my silly “cartoon soaps,” and so on for over a decade. The last few years, we’d changed a bit because we were going to be on in the morning, instead. Our format had gone from being called “rock” to ‘light rock” to “mix” to “oldies” – even though it all stayed the same.

Jesse couldn’t stand when we went to being called “Oldies” today, but he adjusted. His adopted the motto, “We may play oldies, but I’ve still great hair.” We started doing a few more little interviews here and there, and it worked – for now. The

problem was, society was changing, and so were listeners. For now, they would enjoy hearing about Jesse's kids and football, but this wasn't a huge high school football area like some others. Soon, we would have a tough choice to make. But, not yet.

Stephanie – Mar. 28 – Wondering About Herself:

I'd gotten a doctor – like D.J., I'd done so because Dad insisted I have one once I became an adult. And, I wondered: Could I have children?

You might wonder why I worried this soon, but there was history in my mom's mother's side of the family. I'd have put this off for years normally – or even put off having a doctor. Now, I wanted to know if I one of few who genetically wasn't able?

I knew Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky had a good family with their adoption. It wouldn't be too bad, but it wouldn't be the same as having my own. And, what about Robert, my boyfriend? Would he be so distressed he walked out?

It's funny, normally I always wanted to know what was going to happen. And yet, with this one, it would have been nice to just ignore the questions, to have something I could just focus on that didn't give me time.

I'd have had to find out eventually, though, once I got old enough my biological clock felt like it was ticking. It's just that now, I decided to pray and if I didn't feel peace I would just go ahead and find out.

If I'd seen D.J. proative and I had been helping someone, too, I would have waited a few years, but now I didn't want to wait. I wanted to have things set up in my life. I already had a book idea or two that would help people thanks to experiences like Sam, who was doing well with Karen and her husband, Michelle's friend Natalie and how Hollywood kids grow up, and how parents can help them, and so on.

D.J. – Apr. 15, 2004 – Steph's Worries Over Committment:

I understood why Steph told me first. She'd asked to talk alone. I knew something big was up, so we had Michelle watch Pammy – and Ramona. Michelle might have started her own home day care had I been more proactive, though she was still a great sitter, having matured so much!

I reminded Steph that we'd had talks about how she worried about relationships, and that she had such a good family. It was hard for her to see how that formed; with a kid it was different. You knew they needed you, so you were there for them, and they would love her back. It was different with a spouse, though. That was one where it had to grow slowly, and she needed to know what would happen.

I thought she might be trying to find every possible reason why they might break up because of her anxiety over losing Mom. She was better than she had been, but I knew she probably still worried. Still, Robert was a nice guy, and she didn't have to figure on talking about this right after the tax deadline.

I told her to focus on trying – don't force it to go too fast. She mentioned what Uncle Jesse had said, and I suggested to split the difference between how deliberate Dad might be – and I was becoming a bit like him – and Uncle Jesse and she'd have it.

I promised to help her tell him, though. The following Saturday, we met for a double date with him. She hadn't needed to worry. We spent time talking first about Dad loaning Joey that last $800, and how this would be just like that for them if they were serious, the first test of their relationship.

Robert admitted he didn't know what to do, but that he wanted to support Steph. She was okay with that; at least he was letting her share what she felt she needed.

As they discussed what they'd like to do in the way of adoption, if it worked out it was clear they would slowly develop a plan, if in fact she was unable, which was still not quite certain yet, and wouldn't be for a while. Even then, miracles happen every day.

Danny – May, 2004 – Michelle's Prom, Danny Feeling Old:

I called and asked D.J. if Pammy could spend the night; considering how busy they were, I figured it might be welcome on her part. But, the biggest thing was, I needed to remind myself they weren't all going to grow up too fast.

With my last little girl going to her senior prom this Friday, though, I found it hard not to fret a little bit. It wasn't' me feeling old, as it might have been in years past. Really, that was more because I was thinking about going through it without Pam, back then, more than anything. Thirty isn't that old, after all. No, it was because of the change; the fact I wouldn't have any reminders – well, except for dozens upon dozens of albums, videos, etc. – of those darling butterfly kisses and dandelion bouquets and all that.

D.J.'s such a great kid – she not only let Pammy spend the night, she sent along a bouquet of dandelions that had come up in a nearby yard. I frustrated her sometimes, but she really had grown to understand, in the back of her mind. All of them did.

I got calls from Jesse and Joey that evening, and we laughed about it. I'd come to realize that it was my late wife Pam I was missing, in some ways – but that I'd be sentimental no matter what. It's just that I didn't have her to share it with now. I didn't have her to get all excited and perk me back up.

I had D.J.'s Pammy, though, to keep me laughing. And, did she ever.

Michelle – Her Prom:

While Dad was having fun with his granddaughter, I was being escorted to a fine Italian restaurant. San Francisco has some of the best places to eat. Jeff stunned me by being very romantic a few years ago, but by now, I was used to his sweet side. I'd have probably seen it far earlier if we'd had the same class in grade school. With this, and the debutante ball, just like Steph and D.J. had had, it was the perfect place to get to see just how special it could be with him.

Of course, we talked a lot and did plenty of other stuff together to see what the more mundane times would be like – just like Mom and Dad. We had interesting talks about family, given our backgrounds – I was youngest, he was oldest.[439]

We didn't want a huge amount of kids ourselves, but I was thinking about a home daycare already, and he liked the idea. I also liked the idea of teaching as a profession, but I was hearing bad things about how many problems there were, and you know Dad; he tried to steer me toward something where I could be more independent.

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[439] He has to watch his younger brothers in "My Fourth Grade Mess" – an older brother would likely do it if there was one, though he could have been sick. A "big brother" advises him about not hanging around Michelle all the time if he wants her to like him in "Once Upon A Mixup," but one would expect Jeff to call an older one "older brother" in that context, so that's a term of endearment for a cousin or something. One could argue that "big brother" is a volunteer with "Big Brothers and Big Sisters," but if his parents were just thinking about divorcing in "My Fourth Grade Mess," it's very unlikely he'd have gotten one of those so fast, as it would take till then to be final. As shown in the Book Universe part, it's generally agreed his parents got back together, anyway, as no other book mentions them being divorced.

Of course, I loved babysitting, and if D.J. had been proactive I migbht well have wanted to do that anyway. It's awesome to say you own your own business. Either way, I was taking early childhood education and the like. Jeff was going into sportscasting; he thought it'd be cool to host "Wake Up, San Francisco" Eventually.

D.J. and Steve had done a lot of more ordinary stuff, too. It just took their being apart over a year for D.J. and Steve to realize routine times were what life together was all about. It wasn't always going to be lots of romance. But, there has to be some to it, or you're just friends; that's what they were toward the end of their first go-around.

They were doing great now, though, and Jeff and I could tell we had plenty of romance and more normal stuff in common. Stephanie and her future husband, Robert, were doing really well by this time, too. They'd been going together a couple years or so.

Joey:

They say sometime, kids marry their dads. Robert was very numbers-oriented as a CPA, so while thoughtful and romantic, he could be meticulous at times, and Steph helped him to loosen up there. She also helped bring him out of a shell and laugh more. He had before, but he kept things in more, like Jesse, though he talked about his feelings plenty. And, like me, he was very comfortable not being bossy but letting Steph take the lead in a variety of areas.

Once, a group of them in college watched a movie so they could laugh about it. It was one of those silly things, probably from the 1950s, "The Thing With Two Heads." He was pretty quiet and didn't laugh much, but then this gorilla with two heads began eating two bananas totally unsynchronized, and he laughed so hard his face turned red and he was on the floor for a few minutes.

In a way, it seemed like Steph had picked someone who struggled so if it didn't work out, she had an excuse, but she liked him right away, too. I think she did the right thing just being friends and letting it turn into love.

Becky - Nov. 12, 2004:

With Michelle in college, D.J. once again became the one to come and watch the kids earlier. However, on their 13th birthdays, we were really proud of Nicky and Alex. They were good enough with the younger ones, I could trust them to get everyone off to school if I had to; of course, there were still lots of sitters around.

Their size was imposing - for the fact they were a month early, they'd grown quite fast. Now, they were both big for their age, they would end up around six feet. In fact, though I hated the thought, they both liked football. They would only be scout team players at the University of Nebraska later, but they were quite agile as receivers on the high school team starting next year. In fact, they won a state title once. My nephew Howie was actually a teaching assistant in one of their courses.

I'd finally let them try out for the team in Middle School, and they liked it. Everyone enjoyed going to their games. Jesse even started to learn more about the game.

Jesse:

I was so proud of my boys, even now. It was rough growing up in the world of the 2000s, before a revival the next decade, especially with a dad who still struggled spiritually. They had cousins who loved them, though, and a very committed home life,

as well as lots of involvement in Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Just like D.J. had encouraged Kimmy, Stephanie did Gia, and Michelle and all of them had done with many, my boys were always heavily involved in lots of things.

They probably could have served on the jury Kimmy got called to serve on this past week, as well, and done a lot better.

Kimmy – Jury Duty:

It was a civil case, a possible breach of contract. I started talking about capital punishment. Then, the lawyers asked us questions about promises. Duane and I were married by this time, and I said sure, if someone agrees to something, they should do it.

They asked what I thought about questionable language, and I said, "Who would be dumb enough to write a contract in something the other person didn't understand? If I started talking in Spanish, it would probably be Greek to most of you."

The lawyers eventually let me out of the case, when I protested that if I needed help, I had to have a lifeline. They didn't want cell phones going off in the courtroom, though, so they wouldn't let me call D.J. to ask questions.

Nicky & Alex:

That weekend, we lost our middle school's conference title game, 31-17.

One of us was always a bit more leery of getting hurt than the other, and we had other differences, but we enjoyed it. We wouldn't have had the interest in college with all the others becoming stars without it, but as it turned out, we still wound up in the food business in some ways; we had unique talents that meant we worked well together when it came to taking over for Dad with the Smash Club.

Dad and the others took us out to eat after this game. When we got home, there was a huge banner across the front of our house - "Wait Till Next Year" it read.

Dad was a little worried, when he thought about how he'd hated school, that we might think it meant repeating eighth grade, but we knew what it meant.

Kimmy might have struggled to understand it, though.

True. It was our junior year of high school when we won the state title game, each of us scoring a touchdown in a 38-19 victory.

We had a great offense, led by a quarterback who would go on to the pros for several years.

Danny - July 4, 2005 – Family Picnic and Sweet Proposals:

Pammy planned to spend the night at our place, though the biggest attraction was her Aunt Michelle, not me.

My mom would end up passing away this fall, and she enjoyed her retirement, because it gave her a chance to travel. The girls had basically just played board games and stuff with their grandparents, because Nick was too busy, then Jesse's parents traveled too much later. As for my mom, she loved to decorate and bake things, but she was so far away, though as stated, maybe she could have developed closer ties with Michelle given D.J. being more proactive and utilizing her more.

However, I was a very young grandfather, and longed to be able to take my grandkids to ball games and stuff, which I enjoyed. I also liked working and building things. Later, the kids in Michelle's home daycare would all call me "Pa," and some –

especially boys – would follow me around like I was really their grandpa.

My fiftieth birthday party in two years wasn't lonesome at all, though with the ages of my grandkids, there was no way they could keep it a surprise. D.J. remembered too well what it was like when Steph was that age, so she didn't even try.

Sorry, guess I should get back to tonight. Michelle lived near campus with Denise, who was engaged to Teddy, but came home often to help with Pammy.

I had just entered the kitchen saying, "I need some catsup for the table."

"Grandpa, you're gonna eat the table?!" Pammy asked with wide eyes.

"The way your Daddy eats, I can see why you thought that was possible," D.J. joked before explaining I mean catsup for on the table.

As we all carried out the last of the food, Jeff and Michelle stood. "We have an announcement," Michelle declared.

"Oh boy!" Stephanie exclaimed before saying, "Wait, I don't know what it is." Michelle and Stephanie were very close – had been since the accident. She sensed what Michelle might say, even if she didn't know for certain.

"Well, Joey knows, too, though he got his directions off a little yesterday when Jeff and I were in the park. Denise called me on my cell phone and told me to come and see a sign streaming from an airplane five miles away."

Jeff laughed. "I might have given him the wrong park; I was so nervous."

"Anyway, Denise wouldn't tell me why I should drive five miles to read what someone was flying from a plane, and yet she wouldn't tell me what it said, either. That's when Jeff decided to pull out this ring." Michelle took off the gloves she'd inexplicably been wearing to reveal a lovely engagement ring.

"Michelle, you're getting married?!" Stephanie twirled her around. "I knew that was it. Oh, boy, this is awesome!" We were all so excited.

"We haven't set a date yet, we want to make it through college first, just like you say you should have, Mr. Tanner," Jeff reported.

"The summer after we graduate," Michelle added.

Pammy had been a little bossy lately, but D.J. knew Michelle was as tricky as she ever was, though she'd emphasize it was she who taught Michelle that, just so Michelle knew D.J. was boss. D.J. decided this was a good time to let Pammy stay even though she normally would have said "no" because of that behavior. D.J. knew Pammy would insist on playing house with Michelle. And, Michelle would drive her nuts, purposely being wilder and more defiant than Pammy ever was, to teach her a lesson.

Stephanie:

Later that day, Michelle told Pammy, "Pretend I just gobbled up a lot of cake while crawling on the table."

"How did my mommy ever put up with you?" Pammy asked, shaking her head.

We laughed. Pammy knew D.J. disciplined Michelle at the worst times. I think Michelle went a little overboard - Pammy would never do some of the things Michelle had done. However, D.J. found it quite entertaining, given that Pammy had a bit of that "big Kindergartener who can do anything" attitude, to see Michelle getting a little of her own medicine while playing with her.

Michelle:

She was a sweet kid. She never gave me any real problems. But, I babysat some wild kids, too. Some of the worst, I would have let D.J. handle if she'd been proactive, as I'd have had lots of trouble getting really tough with them if I wasn't used to it in my own life, at least till I started my own professional babysitting.

I guess those times D.J. said she hoped I'd grow up to have charges just like me came true. But, it was a fair exchange. I handled those kids earlier, but D.J. had had three by the time Kimmy went back to her salon job. She was always copying off D.J. anyway. So, she just let D.J. handle her, since D.J. had more experience. With how odd Kimmy could be, and how easily tricked, her girl was as wild as a few kids put together. Had D.J. waited, I'd have had Kimmy as my first customer, instead.

D.J.:

At times, Michelle sat and talked with Pammy about her behavior and how I felt if Pammy got really bossy with me. It helped Pammy be nicer to Michele, too. There were a few times - if she babysat during Pammy's worst spells - that Michelle said to me, "This is the curse, isn't it? You hoped I'd grow up to have charges just like me, didn't you?"

We laughed together and agreed. I probably had wished someone like Michelle on her. I think all mothers, and even sisters and other babysitters, do at times.

Don't get me wrong. Pammy was a really good girl overall. Part of it was that stage. Plus, she had a baby brother, Steven Joseph, born in summer of 2004. We planned on a couple other children, too. And, her worst stages were nothing like Michelle's. I never even thought of spanking with her or her siblings, not even with light fwaps, and Pammy overall was a wonderful kid and became a great adult, too. In fact, Pammy and Steph's oldest girl each became PA's.

I guess I'd grown to become a lot like Mom, even though I never thought much about it till later in life. I would wish I'd been proactive, but I had a great time, anyway, ending up with wonderful kids who turned into fine adults just like Steph and Michelle had. We were in church as consistently as Mom had been with us, as were my sisters and their families, learning about the love that keeps us going, especially that unconditional love God has for us, and the sacrifice He made. That's all we need to trust in to have eternal life with Him in a perfect Heaven, more incredible than we can imagine.

Ramona – When Papa Gets Called "Potato":

Part of the problem I'd had was that I was very assertive – Mom encouraged that trait in me and then D.J. had to show me how to do it in a proper manner.

Dance was one area where I had lots of self-confidence. Like Stephanie, I always knew just what I was doing, and could dance to pretty much anything later. For now, I just enjoyed being silly. Mom used some of that in promoting her party planning, too, which was really taking off.

I started to hear stories about this Duane and other guys she'd had; I wondered, what in ther world was she doing with them? Although Duane turned out amazingly well, I still am so glad Mom married Papa. Although I knew they were having a tiff once, even at just 35 years old. See, I was starting to learn some Spanish because of his Argentinan heritage, and Papa with the accent on the wrong syllable meant potato. So, whenever Mom was really had at him, she'd call him a potato.

She acted like she was being dumb, and she was still at times. But, I could tell

what this really was. And, I was so glad I had D.J. and her sisters to help me learn how to get through any anxiety I felt as a little girl because of it.

Michelle:

Ramona caught on pretty well to things; she was growing up faster than she should have had to, but we all helped. Kimmy and Daune probably would have married and then stayed together just thinking "someone has to marry us," but this… was a difficult situation for everyone. Kimmy vented to D.J. a lot.

D.J. never had to get as tough as she had with me; in fact, in some ways, Ramona was a bit easier to handle than Pammy, just with a similar attitude. Kimmy had a variety of sitters for her, but she loved D.J. most. She liked me a lot, too, and I had to wonder – if I was watching a child of Kimmy and Duane, what would she be like?

Fernando, at least, brought intelligence in some areas to the equation, and that athletic temperament could be harnessed in Ramona to give her a desire to behave so she could learn to focus on what she wanted to excel at; Duane had a lot of head knowledge but that only went so far. Genetics is strange, so you never know, but the match might not have been as good; then again, there are so many variables.

Jackson:

I was born by this time, too, and I knew Kimmy as just this friend of Kathy's; not a really close friend, but I didn't know the difference, I just knew she was over helping with our parties sometimes and giving Mom and Dad this really wild used stuff. It was so colorful, sometimes "it was like the 1970s exploded," Dad would joke.

As noted before, this part ends in 2009, so we won't go much further, except to share the winner, if Ramona hadn't been born, of that sandwich eating contest. It would have been Kimmy. She'd won a pie-eating one earlier, after all.

Max:

Ramona was really sweet. And, Dad had some brothers, physical and his fellow firefighters, who helped us, too. You just never saw that in "Fuller House" because you still don't see more than half of 1% of peoples' lives. Yeah, I know, I just broke the fourth wall, but Steph broke a wall twice, rigbht? Anyway, they go where there's a need.

Not everyone has that father figure, or a Kimmy and Ramona and such to be a shoulder to cry on, etc.. So, reach out to people, find where there's a need, and be a help.

Jesse – Changing Radio Stations, Nick's Business Changes Names:

Everything worked out really well, all things considered. My sister didn't get the chance to enjoy it, but in a way she did, looking down from above.

Today, July 4, 2005, marked two very big changes for me, too.

The first was accepting that what I saw as more innocent rock and roll was no more. Our station had changed to the contemporary stuff that's got worse lyrics, which talk about things that nobody needs to put in their heads. All this grunge and hip hop was no good. And, Joey and I announced our independence.

There was a station that had been in existence since the 1930s, KLD. It was south of where we lived, not quite in the Bay Area, but they were overjoyed to have us. We couldn't quite name our price, but when we became available, they invited us in quickly.

We had to leave morning drive time for a while, but we got back to it by the start of 2007. We could do all the comedy, all the Beach Boys, everything we wanted.

It was loads better than that other stuff, or than talk radio, for us.

The second big change was the official name change of my dad's business. It was all paid off now, and Steve could change the name to his own if he wished.

Surprisingly, I felt a little sad about that. Not that I wanted to work in it, but I guess I'd hoped Dad would keep working there forever. Nicky and Alex couldn't have bought it at age five or six, much less Melanie or our newest, Tatiana. Dad was only in his middle sixties now, but his heart was older, and he'd need a pacemaker soon.

I guess the business, just like D.J. and Michelle being like Pam and me, then Michelle and D.J.'s kids being like I was with Michelle, just shows that if you put effort into it, that love is going to just keep on growing. It was really rough when Pam died, but we made the best of it. Just like always.

Joey – Oct. 2006:

I'd been part of a great family, all because I'd answered the call when somebody needed help. That's the most important thing of all, being willing to care. So I was a little silly and childlike; maybe I didn't feel really comfortable being any other way at times. But, we did make it through.

I had a great family because of the experience I'd gained helping my best friend; after all, it was one through Michelle, in a way, that I met my future wife. I'd have met her anyway, somehow, but God has a way of making things work out.

Still, I liked to have fun; my Tigers even made it back to the World Series, finally. Steph was excited, too; she hadn't really known anything about baseball in the 1980s, till she started attending baseball games with me. Ironically, now our favorite clubs were in the Series; she still liked St. Louis, though she'd like them a lot more with Ozzie Smith.

The girls never really were much for betting, except for jokes by Michelle, when she wanted to try and get D.J. to do some of her chores. Still, we had friendly wagers on this Series, and liked to joke about it. We just bet the regular, a dinner or something. We loved just celebrating the fact that a couple great cities could make it. I'd been back to Detroit a few times in the 1990s, often for comedy shows. Some of the family went to St. Louis and Kansas City on vacation once, too, though not all of us.

Danny – June, 2007 – Big San Francisco Sports Moments:

Joey and Steph had lots fun with thinga like that. She'd liked the Cardinals in 2004, but we were always really kind and compassionate, so she also liked the Red Sox, since they hadn't won for so long. That year, she was a lot more toward the Cardinals.

The twentieth anniversary of Pam's death passed with me not really recalling as I had. There were enough distractions, of course – especially San Francisco sports. The Golden State Warriors were in the playoffs for the first time in a generation; which is pretty amazing considering how many teams make the playoffs in the NBA. Their futility had led me to become much more of a Giants and 49ers fan in the last couple decades, but I really had fun here. The entire city went bananas.

However, a bigger problem loomed, which was Barry Bonds surpassing Hank Aaron's record. We knew it was bound to happen, and I personally didn't like all the steroids talk. It was rough, because I sort of suspected something was amiss as early as

2001, he'd ballooned up so much. And yet, there was no proof, and all the sportswriters who "broke the story" seemed interested in was making money.

That's one thing that frustrated me. It's similar to what led D.J. away from journalism in school. It seemed like more and more, people weren't focusing on good, wholesome activities. The Warriors were in the playoffs, and still everything centered on this steroid issue. Why couldn't people just be happy for Bonds and be done with it, forgiving him and just being glad to witness history, no matter how it was or wasn't achieved? There were quite a few here in the Bay Area who cheered for Bonds, and I think we did mostly because we felt sorry for him and all the flak he was taking. We'd always been very compassionate that way. Still, it seems too often, people were trying to smear each other anymore.

Come to think of it, why couldn't we just focus on fun and games? Records were a lot more fun to talk about when it was Stephanie breaking her hula hoop record in first grade several times. She knew how to have fun.

Maybe Joey was right all along about staying young at heart.

Stephanie – Importance of concentrating on family:

Despite the problems, we still had fun watching sports. However, the scandals everyone seemed to focus on helped us to keep our focus on the main things – love, family, togetherness, and so on. None of this junk that modern music talked about, just true unconditional love, tenderness, and mercy.

Some of that, for instance, was that last year at this time, I was proposed to. It was so exciting. I was finally going to have the great family I'd always dreamed of; I could be the mom we'd had before she died. My husband, Robert, was a CPA, so I would be running the family a lot, anyway, especially during tax time. We'd have quite a few kids. We were also both interested in adoption. Just watching how much joy Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky found in it was enough, though.

I think things went pretty well, even with the tragedy of losing our mom. Even without D.J. being proactive, somehow we made it through, and she ended up doing a pretty good job with us, anyway, even when she just reacted. The Lord made things work out for good, just like we trusted Him to, even though we didn't always think about that in our early years like we did now.

What would have happened with that office in the fourth bedroom? Who knows? A more dedicated D.J., certainly; Mom and Dad had talked about how important it is for someone to be on that floor to help, after all. And, certainly a bunch of other different and cool things would have transpired, too.

I guess, as Joey might say, we should ask Dr. Peabody to set the "wayback machine," and we'll find out. We had a great time right here. It was a time filled with great memories. However, that office and all that followed would have been fun, too.

VIII: THE FORK IN THE ROAD - Aug. 1984-May, 1988

Interlude: Book Universes

Full House books show a universe much more pleasing to some. The younger girls are less rebellious, much more polite, etc. Michelle is more compassionate, as if she takes after a more mothering D.J., not Jesse. He never uses pet names like "munchkin," and has lived in the attic from day one. He's as close to Michelle as Joey; like a dad, but the bond isn't the motherly-type of the TV Universe.

The book universe is unique and deserves its own section. There is a consensus about events, including Michelle having a summer birthday. A few get an age off by a year, but they could be typos, and average out. The office can be a den or study - terms are interchangeable, and some family members could use different terms.

Many early things, before and just after Pam's death, are the same, except for the mentioned point of departure and other little things, like why Michelle's born earlier. Feel free to refer back to the TV Universe if you want.

You won't be bored with sameness. Only things different enough are covered in depth. Usually, if something in the TV Universe is the same in books, it's not covered. (Stephanie wrecking the car, for instance.) Often, if it would happen another way, the difference is merely mentioned, but not always. With Michelle in a different class, and her and Stephanie as better role models, many episodes after season 4 don't happen like they did in the TV Universe. (One estimate is that 8 in season 5 and 6, about a dozen in season 7, and 15-16 in season 8 don't.)

Some, like what happened to Gia in books or things that happen in both (Steph's Kindergarten wedding of letters Q and U, etc.), flow better in the TV section, so only get mentioned there. Same with rare footnoted books that occur in both. (Numerous books, of course, are only TV canon, one has parts in both.)

This is also true with much of the adults post-series. However, some things flow better here, so they are included or elaborated on in this part. Of course, books are covered quite well, with special events highlighted. More attention, too, is given to Samantha, created by Paul Austin and mentioned at the start. It's a heartwarming story very worthy of the "Full House" tradition.

Danny - Aug. 15, 1984 – The new office:

It wasn't any one thing that led me to put an office in the fourth bedroom. As with many life decisions, several reasons entered into it. Joey suggested I flip a coin. D.J. was already smart enough to know that was silly and childish. Of course, then she suggested rock, paper, scissors. Thankfully, she was still my little girl in some ways. At times, I was afraid I'd wake up and she'd be off and married already.

I earned quite a bit in bonus money from my time at the Olympics. The more I thought, an office would be very nice. I could work at home a bit more in preparing for my broadcasts. A third child could share the nursery with Stephanie at first, and we could move Steph into D.J.'s room for a year or two when needed.

Pam had made these cute pink bunnies for Steph's room, but if it was a girl, they could stay around for a while longer, even if Steph moved into D.J.'s room. If a boy, well, he would dislike them starting at about age two.

The girls were thrilled our house had grown a room, as D.J. called it. And, with

no baby on the way yet, they didn't think about being potential roommates.

Joey - Sept. 16, 1984:

Danny and Pam invited me over. The room was immaculate. There was a couch in it, a desk with many papers in and around it, all neatly filed, a nice office chair, a couple other chairs, and even a small TV with a VCR.

"You know," I told them, "this is a great den. You don't have a fish mounted up there, though," I said, pointing to the wall above me. I immediately flopped onto the couch and stretched out. "Ah, this is the life."

As Stephanie climbed on top of me, Danny corrected me. "Joey, this happens to be the room that will allow me to spend more time at home with my darling children. Comedians can have dens. Professional sportscasters have offices or studies."

"If you want to call it that, that's fine with me…hey." Stephanie accidentally stuck her finger up my nose. I sat up, held her finger in front of her, and emphasized, "Remember, Stephanie. You can pick your friends, and you can pick your nose, but you can't pick your friend's nose." Pam was laughing too hard at my line to correct Stephanie immediately for being a little too rough.

"I sowwy." I hugged her when she apologized.

Pam picked her up and praised her for saying she was sorry right away. "She really is becoming a very good girl. She still climbs, but usually it's only where we let her. And, she's gotten pretty good at controlling herself." She kissed her and let her down. "She's learning, slowly but surely." I could tell she was proud - Pam always wanted to be the best, and felt like she was the best mother in the world with how her girls were progressing. D.J. and Stephanie really were wonderful.

Pam – Nov. 14 - Stephanie's Verbal Skills, First "How Rude":

I sometimes absently said someone or something was "rude." Little did I know Steph was listening in. Her verbal explosion really came near four, like most do, but even a year earlier, she was already very verbal. And, as I was trying to put her down for a nap, she sputtered, "How rude!" I couldn't stop giggling. She said it to D.J.'s friend Kimmy a fair amount then, too; I think she realized it got a laugh, that's why.

Danny – Jan. 21, 1985 - Stephanie and naps:

Stephanie was filled with energy, but that meant usually, she exerted herself so much it was easy to get her to lay down, at least if Pam snuggled with her.

That became harder when she was three, though. That's when Pam realized it was important to find activities for her, such as the playgroup she organized with moms she knew. That really increased her skills with smaller kids, since most were a year or two younger than her. And, it tired her out a bit more than she might have been.

Still, she became one of those kids who gave up naps pretty fast, and so we'd just put her into her room and let her talk with stuffed animals or sing or read picture books or whatever else, as long as it was quiet.

At times, she'd doze off for a while, of course; she hadn't completely given them up. She was at the age where some people say kids sometimes need half a nap. One time next year, she'd jump on her bed and recite the ABCs forward and backward. Usually if she did that for a long stretch, she was so worn out she went to sleep, anyway, of course.

But, it just goes to show that she always had plenty of energy.

Joey – Apr. 2, 1985 – Danny boasting of family on the air:

A good newscast should have a friendly crew. They liked Danny because he made it feel like home; to prevent dead air he could easily talk about family and stuff. He was very dedicated to work, though, so especially for season previews like this, he'd pour over stats like crazy. However, this Monday, having the office had helped him to be prepared enough to talk about family a little more.

He joked, "You know, my D.J. could do a better job of coaching the Giants, that's how super she is. And as for Stephanie, she's got so much energy, D.J. probably thinks she could play for them." The others laughed. "Since she's not old enough, this could be a bad year for the Giants, but I wouldn't be surprised if she was the first female big leaguer." He wasn't right about that, but he accurately predicted a Padres downfall, though part of that was because he didn't like their dirt colored road uniforms. He had the Astros losing to the Cubs, who would lose to the Tigers. He was only a year early on the Astros winning their division, and they were good that year.

He was right about something else that day, too. He said the most fulfilling thing in anyone's life was family. I hoped people listened, because it is so true.[440]

D.J. - Nov. 8, 1985:

Steph had entered my room late one evening. She'd been in bed; I had a later bedtime and was also allowed an extra fifteen minutes to read.

I put down my book; Stephanie seemed too antsy for me to read to her, though I tried. We walked into the hall, and headed toward the office. "Let's see what's in here to look at, since you don't seem able to stay in bed tonight."

We looked at some of the 1984 NFL preview magazines - we could go through them and cut things out if we wanted, since they were in the outdated pile. I remarked candidly, "I much prefer the ones that said we were going to the Super Bowl, not the ones that said the Redskins were going."

"When we go there, will they have a playground?"

I laughed in spite of myself. "I don't mean we're going personally, Steph. I mean the 49ers, our football team."

"Oh. Why didn't you say so?"

"Because you take things too literally. It's like my joke about how 'Mom' upside-down is 'wow.' That's just because the M looks like a W. Here, I'll show you." I led her back into her room, where she had magnetic letters and a board. "See that?" I spelled out "Mom," then put the letters upside-down.

"Mmmm, okay." She was skeptical, but at least she believed me. After a few minutes she said, "Let's see what Mommy and Daddy are doing."

We stood in front of the door, but I prevented Stephanie from knocking. "You're supposed to be in bed, and…" I tried; their door was locked, as I expected.

Stephanie gazed curiously at the door. "Why would they lock it?"

"Well, Steph, married people just do weird stuff sometimes, right?" I ad libbed,

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[440] Sam, who you'll meet later, is in the Fraser St. district here and a different one in the TV Universe. This is one of a few things that influence a parent in this timeline to consider marriage at a time they didn't in the TV Universe, and/or sways them to move into the family's Fraser St. district mansion.

shrugging as I led her back to her room. I had an idea what they might be planning, from things Mom had told me, but I knew Steph didn't need to hear it.

Stephanie thought for a second as she lay down while I rubbed her back. She muttered, "I guess so," and began to drift off to sleep. I had to laugh. I always wanted to be the best, and I'd become a good big sister, like they knew I would. Sometimes, she got on my nerves, but it was fun to be around her.

Danny – Dec. 27, 1985 – Stephanie's curls:

Stephanie loved dolls, especially doing their hair. Soon, she wanted a perm, instead of just having her hair curled manually by Pam. I was afraid she wouldn't have the patience while getting it done, but Pam finally convinced me to let her.

D.J. and Steph were really bonding, as she'd gotten used to her being around. D.J. kept boasting that Stephanie looked like Shirley Temple. She loved to "sing" like some two-year-olds do, too. She'd go back to her natural hair at about eight.

Pam: Aug. 19, 1986 – Helping Sisters Get Along:

Michelle Elizabeth Tanner turned a week old today. The girls couldn't get enough of talking and cooing at her. D.J. didn't like seeing the baby get all the attention, though.

However, she had another concern, too. "Mom, my toys are all out of place again! Why does Stephanie have to play in my room?" she called out to me today.

We sat on the living room couch, and I put an arm around her. "Dear, we talked about how with an office in one bedroom, Stephanie has to share the nursery. And, that means when Michelle's napping, Stephanie needs a place of her own where she won't disturb her. Remember, we said once Michelle's old enough for normal sleep patterns, she'll have the nursery to herself, and Stephanie and you will have to share for a couple years." D.J. frowned. "Come on, D.J., where's that smile?"

"It flew to the Grand Canyon and fell in," D.J. groused jokingly. She glanced at me and said, "At least one of us is smiling."

I couldn't help but notice a slight upturn of her lips when she said that, though. It was both of us after all. "It's going to be rough when school starts again, huh?"

"I need that space for my friends and I, Mom. And, I want to make sure she doesn't get in my stuff. At least now I can shoo her away or distract her."

"Well, honey, if there's a problem we need to sit down and talk about it, so you each can have a little privacy. But, we share in this family, too, don't we?"

D.J. rose and sighed. "I guess so. It's just not fair - why can't Dad finish the attic and let me have a place there?"

"I know; it seems so easy since you saw that office being put in. But, we don't have the money to do another whole room right now. The attic's got that rollaway bed, but it would cost too much to turn it into an apartment." I held her hands in mine. "I know you got used to being an only child, then to still having your own space. But, let's think of all the good things about a large family."

"Well…" Stephanie came running in from outside flailing a small net, with which she was trying to catch insects. D.J. turned and laughed. "It means more little kids to make you laugh when you're blue. It means always having someone to talk to." I helped her, and we went on to name quite a few great things.

D.J. – Why Babies Need Space, etc., Pam Helps Teach Sharing More:

I would have figured I'd always have my own room if that office hadn't been there. With it, Stephanie needed somewhere to be when the baby slept; either to play in or to be sent to when naughty, though with the latter she'd just sit or lay on my bed. In fact, once Michelle got close to a year old, Mom and Dad planned to move Stephanie in with me, till Michelle was old enough for a roommate.

I didn't like that idea. Why couldn't Stephanie and Michelle have their own room? They'd grow closer together that way.

Dad countered by mentioning that when Steph got old enough to understand and respect boundaries, she'd be better off rooming with me. Michelle would only be a year old, and not as teachable. She might mess up everything of Stephanie's. That wasn't even considering how much her coming to bed later could disturb the baby.

He had a point - I wouldn't want a toddler rooming with me. However, I would much rather have had nobody rooming with me.

Thankfully, by the time the unthinkable happened, Mom had had time to help us get used to respecting each others' privacy, yet also to sharing our space.

Pam – On kinds of love:

I didn't retain much Greek, but something Papouli taught me at seven or eight always stuck with me. It shows how beautiful Greek is when it comes to the word love.

One word is eros and is better called "lust." It's when a person has a crush on someone, they care physically but there is no tenderness attached to it at all.

There, there's philia. It's a brotherly love, where we get "Philadelphia." Philia has no physical part at all. It's just an intense loyalty, devotion, and so on. One can have a philia love of things, not just people – like a bibliophile loves books. Some people call what they have philia when it's really eros, which confuses things.

There is a devoted spousal love when it comes to husband and wife, and it's what Danny and I had. We wouldn't have cared if we were in our nineties, when there was no chance of eros being there because we would both be so old and unattractive. That's the way it should be. In any sense, the best kind of family love is very close to agape.

Agape love is an unconditional love that is so pure, there is no selfishness or need for return love or anything. It's what God has, so deep He loved us like this before we could ever love Him.

Modern Greek also has storge. It was the sweetest to me as a parent, though it's really for any kind of family love it's mostly a parent-child love.

Storge love combines the tenderness, mercy, compassion, and everything that a parent, especially a mother, has for her children. It's that kind that makes one willing to go through anything for them as long as it would keep your kids safe.

I knew my girls couldn't have that kind of love yet, but I did want them to form a sisterly bond that had all the loyalty of friendship with that tender warmth that comes from a great family. I know children will squabble at times, but now that I had three darling children, I wanted them to learn that even if they did, they would always be sisters. They should therefore always be willing to forgive and move on easily.

In a way, that last Mother's Day with them, complete with breakfast in bed and cute cards and the like, was the ultimate in that storge love. It was a special moment, and when it was over, I could look back and say we'd done a good job to that point.

Sadly, it would be up to them to carry on without me. However, they did a great job, because we always had that unconditional love. Not quite agape – I don't think any person can have that since we're human. But, as unconditional as can be, with our nature.

The beautiful thing is, even Jesse would get into the act. I loved my brother dearly, and looking from above, I loved the man he became. Although, personally, I'm glad it was D.J. who ended up as the nurturer; some things just require a mother's touch.

Jesse - May 23, 1987 – Rooms, after Pam's death:

They'd discussed moving Steph in with D.J. before Pam's death, and it wound up as a Godsend when D.J. helped her come out of their room much more quickly than she would have and more often right afterward.[441]

Now, we weren't sure what to do at first. The nursery was too crowded to squeeze Michelle's crib, Steph's bed, and Danny's parents on a rollaway bed. The attic could be a guest room, but Danny's mom would be in D.J.'s room pretty much when she stayed after Pam died. This was especially true with the mess in the attic, once Danny started having it converted into an apartment.

That helped D.J. grow even more accustomed to sharing her room. Stephanie was in there pretty much, too, since she wanted her grandma to sleep there with her. It made sense, Michelle didn't really understand much of what was going on and D.J. didn't need the companionship near as much as Steph did at night.

Last night, Steph had a nightmare and instantly crawled into D.J.'s bed. After they talked for a moment, she asked the cutest thing. The fact I was telling everyone how funny it was showed I loved family life now.

Stephanie – Tear Jerker, "Sweet By and By":

I don't remember it, but D.J. says I insisted on going to the beach for vacation, to see Mom. I said I knew Heaven was at the beach.

"Steph…" D.J. wasn't sure where I'd gotten the idea, and was too sleepy to think right then; it was almost midnight, but I was awake thinking about Mom.

"Come on, Deej, you remember. We sang about it at the funeral."

"Beach…what did we sing about a beach?" She muttered using word association – beach, sand, water, shore. After a moment of confusion, D.J. realized I meant - "In the sweet by and by, we will meet on that beautiful shore."

D.J. explained that song was talking about Heaven being so far away, and that it would be so long till we saw her again. The shore was to some crystal sea she'd heard about. It was impossible to go there in this life.

We cried together for a little bit before drifting off to sleep, with Dad coming in to make sure we were okay. Even there, D.J. showed that motherly tenderness, though she didn't realize it. I'd have gone to her with a few nightmares anyway later, but even then it would have been mostly to Dad. Now, it would be closer to even.

I still clung to Dad a lot, because of that loving, parental bond. However, D.J. and

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[441] This was majority consensus, but it should be noted that some felt Steph would have been moved into D.J.'s room when the baby was born, months before the accident. A few felt Steph and Michelle always shared a room, but that's unlikely considering the needs mentioned for a baby to have her own room for her and her older sibling's sanity. A planned move of Steph back in with Michelle that's delayed is most likely. Either way, D.J. has grown up with her and helps her come out and feel comfortable much faster in this universe, though the "Fuller House" series comment is a normal exaggeration.

I were closer. My asking D.J. instead of Grandma about that kind of stuff helped D.J. think about us a bit more, and how much we needed.

Danny - June 10 – Attics, etc.:

Jesse planned to move in to help in a couple months. He was really starting to enjoy spending lots of time with us. But, where to put him?

There was already a bed and fixtures in the attic. The whole third floor had been mostly for storage, occasionally as a guest room. It was 1300 square feet. [442] We had a second attic - a crawl space above the third floor.[443] For now, my mom slept in D.J.'s room. Steph slept on a cot quite a bit in D.J.'s room, too, right after Pam's death.

The best idea was to get the attic done up as an apartment. That meant I couldn't quite pay off the entire house with the insurance. I came close, though, and it got paid off next year, even with Joey's place in our basement/garage.

As for it reminding me of Pam – well, everything was still reminding me of her, less than a month after the accident. It was a lot better now than later. I couldn't use that as an excuse, which is really what it was, with no more rooms available on the second floor. I just had to push to the back of my mind how Pam and I talked about remodeling it someday, and I was able to, since those memories just fell in with everything else.

Jesse:

That attic apartment was a great deal. It would be done by early August, just in time for me to move in, and I could decorate it the way I wanted. Joey was moving in, too, but he'd have to share his toys just like the rest of them.

Seriously, I was really looking forward to this. I was getting more and more into this family thing, and I figured after a few months, I could move out. Then again, it was my own bachelor pad, and the rent was free as long as I provided child care.

I'd quickly grow to love it. I could even lock the door for a while when the stress got to me, like the following March, when I was tempted to leave but didn't.

D.J. – July 4 – Separation Anxiety:

Though Michelle didn't understand what was going on, she seemed a little fussier than usual. Dad explained why today.

Had Michelle been only five or six months old, it would have been a tad less complicated. But, at nine months, she'd gotten past her stage of bonding with Mom so that she understood in her mind who was family, what a stranger was, and so on. In fact, a few days before Mother's Day, she'd said her first word – "Mama." It always warmed our hearts to know Mom got to hear that, less than a month before she died.

However, now Michelle was expressing separation concerns because that one caregiver she'd most closely bonded with – Mom – wasn't there.

This was completely normal. Dad explained she'd just need reassurance that someone would always be there who loved her. That's what we gave her, and it worked. She first said "Dada" around this time, too.

Danny - Thu., Aug. 13, 1987:

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[442] Episode "Fuller House" gives this figure

[443] Episode "Take My Sister, Please," book "No Rules Weekend" and a few other places.

A day after Michelle's first birthday, celebrated by her wearing a piece of her cake as a hat, my mother began packing. Stephanie was really anxious for her to stay - she tried to fit into Mom's garment bag with only her head sticking out. It was a cute picture. I just couldn't let one of my daughters be carry-on luggage, though.

D.J. didn't try to move out or anything the next day, but when faced with the fact Stephanie would be living with her, she tried to move Michelle's crib into her room instead. She contended that Michelle also needed lots of extra attention, and that she could teach her more easily to stay out of her stuff.

I reminded her how we'd discussed moving Stephanie into her room soon,. Michelle's first birthday would have been a good time. So, there wasn't any difference. Besides, with D.J. being the oldest person besides me on the second floor at night, Steph might be climbing into her bed sometimes yet, anyway, if she was really scared. Finally, they were generally good at respecting each other's privacy - better than they would have been, anyway. In the end, she agreed.

Jesse - Sat., Aug. 15 – Beautiful sight:

I came down from my place in the attic, and stepped into the nursery with Stephanie's pink bunnies - they would be there till the girls switched rooms.

"Oh, what a beautiful morning, oh what a beautiful day," D.J. sang. Her voice wasn't perfect, but she sang with joy in her heart, just like Pam.

I got a little emotional as I watched her sing and change Michelle's diaper. "Deej…" I wasn't sure how to continue.

"It's okay, Uncle Jesse, I've got her." She turned back to Michelle, who grinned broadly as she listened. "You had to wait a couple minutes longer while we slept, huh? Daddy worked late telling everyone who won and who lost."

Stephanie never had to fake excitement - D.J. was faking a tiny bit, but she was getting better at genuine enthusiasm over this, though at ten she would have liked to do her own thing. Stephanie had come into the room, too.

"Now we get to go downstairs and have lots of fun, and since it's such a pretty day maybe we can even go to the park." That sounded even more genuine.

I could tell she was trying to think of what else Pam might have said. She was bouncing and cuddling her just like Pam, though. "Deej, you got so much of your mom in you, I can't believe it."

"I don't know about that," D.J. said, suddenly solemn for a second. "She was just so awesome. I'd like to be that good, but…" She pushed that thought aside, not wanting to make her sisters sad, as she finished cleaning and diapering Michelle.

"Hey, Deej," Danny said as he popped his head in the door. "I thought I heard Michelle crying a minute ago. Here, let me dress her." I offered to do the same.

D.J. steadfastly refused. "I'll do it, Dad. It's okay."

Danny – D.J. Deals with Pam's Death:

D.J. had a particular way of dealing with Pam's death. She tried to fill the void by doing everything sometimes. She'd be the same way later at Thanksgiving.

Jesse would have jumped up if he'd been on the second floor, and he'd have been changing that diaper and starting to bond with Michelle. Now, it was D.J. doing it. Michelle cried or babbled or whatever a minute longer than she might have with Jesse,

but D.J. still got up for her. I'd worked later last night and was really tired.

Jesse turned to me - we looked the same, except I didn't mind shedding a tear or two. "Ain't that just like Pam?" Jesse asked, a little choked up but trying to hide it.

"I know. It's scary."

Joey – Oct. 1 – How That Bond Grows:

As D.J. spent more and more time with Michelle, something happened that caused D.J. to realize how much Michelle needed someone, too.

Jesse left for work with Nick almost as much as D.J. left for school now, till he left the family business. Still, it was an interesting part of child development.

Michelle needed someone to turn to, as a toddler, to replace Pam, and D.J. was providing that love and warmth and security almost as much as Danny, who went in to work later, as a sportscaster. Soon, Michelle would be following D.J. around like a puppy when she was home. Jesse and I were important caregivers, but when D.J. or Danny came home, Michelle did everything to them that toddlers normally do to their mother or – in some cases - a nanny or other caregiver, as far as bonding.

I was disappointed that, while most comics and some cartoons have Swee'Pea as Popeye's adopted son, nowhere do they show how that bond formed, I don't think. Still, I'm sure Swee'Pea missed Popeye when he went out to defend Olive just as much.

Jesse:

Back to Michelle, it's amazing how most well-adjusted kids - even if they're with a sitter most of the time - bond with a parent, if one is there emotionally and responds to them and talks with them and stuff. And, when left, they'll cry for a few minutes, until suddenly something distracts them and they're okay. Of course, eventually, they don't care if Mommy or Daddy leaves, which I found hard with my boys.

Babies spend their first years forming ideas about how safe and comfortable the world is, and about who they are. They do this based on how they're treated. That's why time is so important. Michelle was missing something, but with all of us working together, we filled that void very easily, almost as if we weren't even thinking about it. That's because she was just your normal, well-adjusted child.

Years later, I couldn't help but think that this prepared us for something bigger, even though we had no idea what that could be. We were having enough trouble getting through those first holidays. Babies just understand things like being held and having someone play little games, but we dealt with stuff like Christmas.

Stephanie – On D.J. mothering her:

I still made up monster noises and stuff, but D.J. was starting to learn how to recognize when I needed extra attention. Of course, I liked to have that from Dad more than anyone. He took time with all of us to do things. But, D.J. was a bit different than she might have been. She kept assuring me there were no monsters and things like that, but she took just a bit more time to try to distract me. She was decent at distracting me, though not nearly like Mom had been. Still, she was learning.

Danny:

Some of that, D.J. remembered from Pam very easily. When Steph was learning

to read, Pam put messages in magnetic letters on a board so Steph could read it when she came down in the morning. The message would tell the weather, a fun activity for the day, or something else. She knew how to read by this time, and we were busy. D.J. did it some for her, though, and they kept it up with Michelle some, something that never would have happened otherwise. So, Michelle's education was advanced a bit, too.

Kimmy – Dec. 23 – D.J. more protective:

I strode unannounced into the Tanner home with a sack. Joey took one look and said, "D.J.'s changing Michelle," like he wasn't sure what to say about my bag.

"Hey, Deej," I said in the nursery as I put the bag down. "Whoa, diaper duty. Babies should come with a warning label," I said once she greeted me. I waited till she had put the new diaper on before I finally dared to approach her.

"Hey, Kimmy. Still no jokes about being a mom; I'm impressed."

"I know it's gotta be hard, Deej," I said tenderly.

"Thanks." She picked Michelle up and bounced her merrily. "What's in the bag?"

"Coal. I wanted to give Stephanie something special."

"Kimmy, that's mean," she said matter-of-factly as their dad entered. She put Michelle down, and the toddler ran to him.

"Well, if you'd been out playing with her I would have just given it to her myself, and teased her. But, I was afraid if I'd let it sit around, you'd use it to stoke a furnace." I turned to her dad as he gave me a look. "It'll go well with that tub I saw."

"Kimmy, we have a regular furnace," he said, then taking Michelle downstairs.

"Could have fooled me with that old tub," I said, pointing to the bathroom once he left. "I never got the chance to tease about taking a yearly bath."

"Kimmy, we need to talk." We sat on a couple chairs in the nursery. "Kimmy, I know you hear enough teasing at school that you've learned to tune it out."

"Of course, Deej; I'm gonna have to once we hit the campaign trail to become Congresswomen." That was still a very reachable goal, in our young minds.

D.J. agreed. "But, I don't want you to tease Stephanie like this. Little things, like calling her Motormouth, are fine. But, don't you think a bag of coal is a bit over the edge?" I didn't. "Well, I do. Steph takes incredible pride in being good; her conscience bothers her a lot. She's still at the age when she'll take something like a bag of coal very personally. She'll just burst out loudly she's been bad as it is. You know how I tricked our Uncle Jesse into letting me stay up and eat all that dessert in exchange for not telling for rehearsing so loudly? I know she'd have done it with me and then just blurted out crying that we'd been bad right away."[444]

"Is this because of your mom?" I asked sincerely. I tried hard to care about that situation; I'd seen how broken hearted everyone was. "Christmas must be tough."

"It is hard this Christmas, but that's not the point. I feel the need to protect my sisters. Even if I didn't, there's a limit to how far jokes should go. There are plenty of other things to make jokes about, but at her age, and with her personality, I do not want

[444] "Our Very First Night," as Danny discusses it with the girls. If D.J. doesn't move to the garage, most say Danny isn't distracted & removes a small privilege from Steph like dessert for one night for letting the guys (and Michelle) suffer the craziest diapering ever without helping or showing where the diapers are. More importantly, this shows how little things start to grow, as D.J. gets Kimmy to think about others in a way she wouldn't in the TV Universe. With this and D.J. talking to several of them later, it shows why there is no teasing of Kimmy in the Book Universe, nor teasing by her.

you giving Stephanie a bag of coal for Christmas," she finished emphatically.

"Okay, Deej." I was sad for a moment, feeling like I'd really blown it, but D.J. assured me that at least I hadn't given her the coal. Suddenly, I brightened. "Hey, as long as it's here, you told me your Uncle Jesse was a really wild one." I dashed up to the attic before she could stop me, keeping the bag in the nursery.

Jesse and I came down a moment later. "D.J., do you know she just asked me if I thought Santa would bring me any presents?" He walked away, shaking his head.

"Maybe you better just stoke someone's furnace with it," she suggested. I agreed, and left with the bag. We talked some later, and I learned not to tease so much, and let Stephanie tease a little for a while, though D.J. worked with her, too.

D.J. - Dec. 25 – Why Becky's there early:

This first Christmas without Mom was hard, as one would expect. I hadn't considered the fact I'd done everything else well last time. I'd been too bummed out over not defrosting the turkey. This time, I did less, and it worked out very well.

Dad had some good news. A woman named Rebecca Donaldson had sent in a job application. Because he had his office, he'd had more time to study some applications.

Becky was a talk show host, but Dad pushed the sports director to hire her. They could always use more reporters, but also, the station manager pondered finding a new host for the morning talk show. Becky would have been hired for the show. However, her resume was quite impressive in sports, too. She'd done as much at the University of Nebraska as Dad had at San Francisco State. She had lots of experience in sports, and called a great game of hockey.[445] "Don't let this one go," Dad told his boss.

Eventually, Becky came in mid-January.[446]

Joey – Dec. 30 – Becky Gets Hired:

She probably would have been available later, but why take that risk with such a good candidate? The station manager decided to interview Becky, and she came out today. He liked her right away, and hired her. She'd be coming out soon after her birthday, meaning in a couple weeks.

Meanwhile, D.J. was bonding lots more with Michelle, and loving it by now.

Jesse – Jan. 17 – Steph's Birthday Near Kimmy's:

Had Stephanie had real animosity toward Kimmy, she wouldn't have realized this till later.[447] But, D.J. got Kimmy to not tease Steph. So, Steph teased about Kimmy being an airhead, but showed interest. She asked questions, like at her party today.

"So, Deej," Stephanie said as they cleaned up afterward, "does Kimmy have

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[445] "Nice Guys Finish First" - gels nicely with her coming early to repot on sports.

[446] Why she's there earlier: 1. Nicky & Alex are 4 the whole year Michelle's in 4th and Steph in 8th grade, so they married months earlier, so she needed more time to get to know Jesse; 2. A fall anniversary in "Sugar and Spice Advice"; 3. Jesse wrote poems for her every Valentine's Day to woo her ("Dear Michelle: Will You Be My Valentine?"), which implies more than two.

[447] She doesn't "hate" her in books, since there's nothing like the bag of coal thing D.J. stops here. She wouldn't care to ask in the TV Universe, and wouldn't find out, with Kimmy's birthdays oddly spaced. Steph likely learned when preoccupied near the episode "Crushed," as she isn't surprised in "Birthday Blues." A few days before that episode is also possible, but the important thing is, she's not as hostile and she's mature enough to know she shares one with many people.

birthdays? Or does she celebrate something weird, like her first tooth?"

"Actually, Steph, she doesn't have parties at normal times. Her family's odd, they don't celebrate in the same month a lot of times. But, her birthday was yesterday. You were born five years and about twenty hours after she was," D.J. told her. Kimmy didn't celebrate birthdays like normal people – in fact, she didn't do very much like normal people. But, there was less than 20 hours difference between the time Kimmy was born and when Steph had been five years later.

Kimmy came over a while later. "Hey, squirt. Got any cake left?"

"No, it's all gone. But, why did you almost have my birthday?"

"Actually, we share birthdays with people all over the world," Danny said.

"That's right, kid," I told Stephanie, "you got the same birthday as some great people, and some who aren't so great. Then there's Kimmy, who's just weird."

Stephanie hummed. "Okay. But, if you're going to have a birthday on different days, here's some advice. Don't pick Christmas, or you'll only get presents once." She turned to D.J. and said, "She's such an airhead she'd try."

D.J. was about to talk, but Kimmy spoke too fast, as if finally realizing. "Oh, yeah, good point. Your sister's right on top of things, Deej." D.J. simply agreed.

Stephanie – Feb. 11:

By the time we got over the chicken pox, D.J. had even more time with Michelle. I'd learned to tell time, too. I was disappointed that I couldn't meet a real ballerina in school, but we'd get other chances for fun things. We did special things like that with the Honeybees at times over the next few years. Of course, the really great stuff came years later, but I don't want to spoil the surprise. I did that enough at this age.

Danny – Fri., Feb. 18, 1988:

Jesse and Joey were still very involved with the girls, of course. They were slowly learning how to deal with all sorts of things. Of course, Joey had some experience with things like when Steph skinned her knee climbing this afternoon.[448]

He heard her crying all of a sudden and ran out the back door while Jesse was putting Michelle down for her nap; D.J. had gone to the mall with Kimmy and her mom, and I was at work. "Oh, Steph, look, you ripped a little hole in your jeans, you must have been trying to…" He then stopped and started singing, "Climb every mountain" as Jesse came downstairs and went to the back door.

"I can see why she's crying with that singing," Jesse joked. He saw Steph's knee and quickly got out the disinfectant.

"Wait, Jess; we need the voices," Joey said as he sat her on the counter.

Jesse rolled up her pant leg. "Voices?" He looked at the label. "Huh, all kinds of germ fighting agents but no voices as far as I can see."

"Why, that's because they're secret agents," Joey said in his Bullwinkle voice.

"Secret agents? Next you'll be sayin' it's the battle of Wounded Knee."

Steph had been down to mere weeping for a moment, but began sobbing more when she felt the disinfectant. She started chuckling, though, when Joey began impersonating the drops of disinfectant fighting the dirt and germs. He must have done half a dozen different voices.

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[448] Stephanie has a bandage on her knee in "Our Very First Date" – this would be in both universes

"Joey, come on, here's the way to distract her," Jesse said as he began to dab at it, too. "Put your finger on your nose and close your eyes. Now, does the pain have stripes or zig zags?" It had zig zags. "Good, 'cause stripes are bad. What color?"

"Jess, how can you distract someone while telling them that's what you're doing? That's like telling someone there's a surprise party, you'll spoil the surprise."

"Come on, Joey, voices for disinfectant?"

"Well, can you hear disinfectant any better? How does it sound to you?"

"You both sound silly," Stephanie said, managing to grin a little. She waited a second and said, "I could use a band-aid."

"Okay, here…" Jesse pulled out a band-aid.

Joey held up a hand. "Wait – you mean you don't have any Elvis band-aids? I am shocked," he spoke sarcastically.

Jesse was about to respond when Stephanie asked, "Yeah, why don't you?"

"See, you got her thinking you were serious, the kid still takes things literally." Jesse thought for a second, and then said, "Although, come to think of it, it wouldn't be a bad idea." He applied the band-aid and said, "I can draw a picture of him on it."

"No, thank you," she said politely. Joey helped her down.

I arrived home for dinner, as I tried to do most afternoons. Stephanie was in a skirt, so she could show her band-aid off. "Oh, Steph, what happened, are you okay?" I ran to her, picked her up, and hugged her dearly.

"I'm fine, Daddy. I was just trying to climb a tree."

Joey explained what happened. When I asked where Jesse was, he said, "He's on the phone trying to see if it's possible to get band-aids with Elvis on them."

He never did. Somehow, I think I'm glad.

Jesse - Sat., Mar. 25:

The weekend before Easter began with me finishing another poem for Becky. I loved to write romantic stuff, and often tried to put it to music.

When I first met her, something felt different. She didn't care for me right away with my long hair and such. However, she was there to help D.J. with questions about growing up, so I'd get to see her quite a bit. I was actually starting to think about cutting my hair. It sounded strange, coming from me, but this was the start of a real revelation in my life – it was good to bend to please others. Especially women like Becky.

I'd stopped locking my door all the time, too, after having done so for about a week. I realized that helping the girls opened parts of my heart I hadn't paid any attention to. Besides, I really wanted to win Becky over, too, and I sensed, even before, that women liked guys who cared about kids.

So, I usually kept it locked at night, but only very rarely otherwise. I saw what D.J. was doing, and I tried to do some of it, too, though she'd borne the major part of it. I could tell Michelle was bonding with her, and that was kind of cool

D.J. was about to go much further, though, and amaze all of us.

D.J. - Sun., March 26 – Getting Up Early Brings Great Rewards:

As usual, I heard Michelle crying. Knowing Dad would likely bring her into my room, I didn't try to go back to sleep. I was too much in the habit of awakening early by now. And yet, it was Sunday, so just in case he chose to spend time with her himself, I

stayed in bed, instead of going to get her.

"Hey, Deej," Dad said with a smile, seeing me awake. "I changed her diaper. Can you keep her with you while I shower and clean the bathroom tiles?" I didn't know if he was joking or not about the second part.

"Sure, Dad." He laid her in my bed, and I tucked her in next to me. I'd grown to love early mornings when my "Strawberry Shortcake" and I "talked" and played simple games. It was so cute to watch her language develop; she wasn't saying many words, but each little milestone amazed me like I never would have considered.

I was growing to appreciate her in a way I wouldn't have otherwise. Instead of just wanting all my own space, I was exercising my…

Maternal instincts? The concept humbled me immensely. I mean, there was no way I could be half the mother our mom had been, in my mind.

"It's only 6:30, let's close our eyes…no, you're just ready to climb all over me," I said resignedly. She was clearly far too awake for me to cuddle her and lull her back to sleep. By now, she was wide awake like that more often.

I'd have had a great time sleeping in till 8:30 on many days like today, if Uncle Jesse got her up and dressed. Now, since I was up anyway this early, I decided Steph, Michelle, and I ought to go to church. It began at nine.

After Sunday School, I sat in the main auditorium with Uncle Jesse while Steph was in childrens' church and Michelle in the nursery.

I felt like the sermon was directed at me, somehow, though what I got from it had little to do with the topic. It was on the loaves and fishes miracle, and asked a good question. Why didn't Jesus just say "Let there be food" like when He created everything? The minister explained - God wants us to share in His riches. That little boy who gave Jesus his food hardly had anything. And yet, Jesus used what little he had for great things. In the same way, we may feel at times like we have nothing, but He can - and wants to - use what little we have for great things.

I kept pondering my tiny bit of maternal instinct, our missing Mom, and pieces I remembered of her. That occupied all my thoughts, as the minister spent the rest of his Palm Sunday message talking about the richness of grace.

An invitation hymn - "Take My Life And Let It Be" - played, and I couldn't sit still. "Take my hands and let them move, at the impulse of Thy love," the choir sang as I knelt tearfully at the altar. "I don't have much, but take what I have, and help me use it for my sisters, since we don't have Mom," I prayed.

Mrs. Brook, my Sunday School teacher, talked with me at the altar. We'd keep in touch for years, till she passed away in 2000. The minister and everyone congratulated me on my decision. He knew we didn't get to church much, but wanted to encourage everyone, even those who sometimes had other priorities.

I realized something as we went home. I'd tried to cook Thanksgiving dinner myself and failed. I wanted to do it all, to be the woman of the house. I kept wondering if she'd be proud of me.[449] I hadn't even been able to cook the turkey, though. Now, I wasn't trying to do it myself - I was asking Someone to do it through me.

I started to wonder just what I'd done. I wanted my own life, too, after all. On the other hand, I knew somehow, Mom was watching. I felt confident of that.

It would still be hard, like it had been at Thanksgiving. However, somehow, I was

[449] "The Miracle Of Thanksgiving"

more certain now that she was proud of me.

Stephanie – Mar. 28 – Visiting After the Decision:

Because of D.J.'s decision, the minister and his wife came to visit. Dad was at work yet, but Uncle Jesse and Joey were there. Uncle Jesse talked about how he'd just started unlocking his door in the attic again after about a week. He realized he was really enjoying the little interruptions and such. Our minister was glad to hear that – he said having kids was one of the ways God humbles us.

D.J. had been feeding Michelle a bottle before bed; she was off of bottles fast compared to some, but still liked one before, though at a year old she held it herself. She never used a pacifier. She was pretty timid, but not so much that she needed something in her mouth. I don't know why some do and some don't.

The minister's wife talked about how important it was to enforce limits early. They could both tell Uncle Jesse and Joey weren't the type to do that.

They'd been very impressed with how our mom handled things. They were sure D.J. would be the same way. We were always very well behaved, especially out in public. Mom and Dad hadn't been as tough as some parents, but they still enforced limits consistently, taught that there was an absolute right and wrong, and made sure we understood negative behavior had negative consequences. The love and mercy we all showed was just like Christ wants us to show.

D.J. – Advice on raising Michelle:

We had a very understanding and supportive church; they'd visited a couple times soon after Mom's death, and did again after my decision. The way the guys pitched in to help was just the way they felt people should do things.

We'd told them about how wild Jesse had been. He'd told a few things before the funeral, too. The minister knew Mom was the churchgoing one, so he emphasized two things. First, we should handle things like Mom. Second, that it was important to follow the Lord, even though the one who usually did was gone.

They knew all children were given different personalities. Uncle Jesse was more of a rebel than any of us girls, Dad was like us, and Joey had lots of youthful enthusiasm that certainly helped in tough times.

Their point was that you had to be tougher with some kids than others. But, that the key was to be consistent, especially early, because early on was when they learned what was right and wrong, and that wrong behavior had negative consequences.

If we wanted Michelle to be as easy to handle as Steph and I were for Mom, we had to not only hope her personality was similar, we had to make sure everyone was on the same page and stayed there, as far as timeouts and privileges were concerned. If Dad had trouble disciplining Michelle, I would have to step in fast and establish a game plan for me to do it. The reverend's wife said that's where I'd have to trust in the Lord the most, as to what to do, because someone had to fill Mom's role. The right way was for Dad to do it, but if it had to be me, I needed to do it.

We never expected Dad to have a problem, but I'd be ready, just in case.

Jesse - Easter Sunday, Apr. 2 - A family moment:

I smiled and sighed as we prepared for the sunrise service, one time - like at

Christmas - we all went. I was unusually quiet that first Easter without Pam; that was okay, though, given how much Danny rambled.

As we went into the worship center, he looked at the altar. “I bet it took some courage to walk down the aisle here, huh, Deej? Just don’t be too anxious to do that when you’re old enough to get married,” Danny kidded.

“I won’t. And, yeah, it kind of did, but, in a way it just felt natural. Like Mom was beside me.” At that moment, a few friends noticed D.J., and came over to talk. One of them was Hannah Larkin. They would end up in the same junior high and high school together. Pretty soon, we were all talking before the service.

Afterward, we stood around a while. The minister greeted all of us, and spoke highly of D.J.’s decision, while trying to encourage Danny to still be the leader.

“Thinkin’ about your mom, Deej?” She wasn’t sure what to say to me.

“I think it’s hard for all of us to find words, Deej,” Joey consoled her.

“We’re not gonna start being sad again, are we?” Stephanie asked. She’d come into the main part after childrens’ church was over.

“No. Come on, Steph, let’s go get Michelle in the nursery.” Joey and she left; I think he could tell we needed some time to talk.

“I know it’s been really hard since your wife died, Mr. Tanner.”

Danny nodded. “I know that as the parent, I should be leading things.” The minister had told us to remind Dad of that, too, when he visited. “Getting over such a tragic death is really hard, though. I don’t have the faith Pam did. I mean, sure, I prayed the blessing last Thanksgiving,[450] and again at Christmas, but still…”

I was glad Joey had taken Stephanie to the nursery. Danny looked ready to cry.

The reverend knew this wasn’t the time to remind us that we’d see her again - that was the whole point of coming here today, anyway.

Instead, he advised, “Faith takes time to build, Mr. Tanner. I may be a minister, but if a drunk driver ever killed my wife I would likely have very similar struggles. You need someone to comfort you not only once in a while, but in your daily living, because I’m sure many things remind you that the love of your life is no longer here.”

He nodded. “Some days, it’s harder than others. I try not to live in the past, but we had so many hopes and dreams. I’ve made it a point never to blame God, though,” he emphasized. The minister said he was very glad of that.

We then talked about particulars, which we wouldn’t have without D.J. having come forward and pledged to do more. Or, rather, to let it happen so she could be more of a mother figure. “Mr. Tanner, D.J. has vowed to help with some of that until you’re ready. Just remember that you’re the head. She’ll handle whatever you need her to, at your request, that’s the way your daughters should see it.”

Danny agreed; that sounded good. I was sure the minister would have a lot more faith than Danny, but it felt good for us to hear that he’d struggle.

Danny mentioned how he’d struggled with discipline when the others were little.

“It’s important to handle that yourself, but if you have trouble at first, make sure Michelle understands D.J.’s doing it for you. It may not be exactly how the Bible says,” he said with a smile, “but God intended for there to be a mother and father, too, and you certainly don’t have to get remarried tomorrow.” We chuckled. “I think He wants D.J. to be that mother figure for a while, for some reason that we won‘t understand till we see

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[450] “The Miracle Of Thanksgiving”

Him face to face. Just make sure if it‘s a parental duty like discipline, Michelle sees you‘re the boss, and at least be willing to take her to D.J. and say she needs to take care of things. In other words, just like when Pam was around. She did a wonderful job with your older girls," he complimented with great sincerity, having met D.J. and Stephanie a number of times, and heard about them from others.

Danny nodded. "I know. I'm the manager, she's just team captain now. That's a player noted for being a positive influence. They always build up teammates and help lead practices. They can also handle team morale, and even some discipline, like the Kangaroo Court. That's something some teams have where the teammates decide who should be fined for messing up on a play or something," he elaborated.

"I've heard of that," he said as Joey, Stephanie, and Michelle entered. "It sounds similar to my analogy. Older children on the frontier were much more responsible for their younger siblings, and they matured much faster emotionally. For instance, D.J., have you read any of the Babysitters' Club series?" She hadn‘t. "My daughter tells me one of the sitters in that club started at eleven. That was common years ago for such a young girl to baby-sit, whereas now I think it's too young without supervision."

"D.J. could pull it off," Joey chimed in. It was also still the earliest age for the classes Danny signed the girls up for when it came to watching kids.

Danny smiled at D.J.. "I'm proud of you, Deej. I won't push you to do anything, but, well, I'm glad you're willing," he said gratefully, seeming a little choked up.

Stephanie sensed that Danny was a little emotional, though less than when they'd left. "Are you sure everyone didn't get really sad while we were gone?" she asked Joey.

"No, honey," Danny assured her as he picked her up. "We just talked about how Daddy's the final authority, but as long as she doesn't go too far, D.J.'s going to have extra duties. It's what she went forward to pray about last week."

We were doing great holding it in till Steph asked, "'Cause Mommy's not here?"

The minister quietly stepped aside, and we all shared a big family hug.

Danny:

D.J. wasn't a knight on a white horse or anything. She didn't always do what was right. She even skipped school once later that spring.

However, she tried to be the best team captain she could. She provided me with an effective transition from life with Pam in several areas, especially when it came to Michelle, and served as Pam's replacement in a number of ways for Steph, too. Because she didn't feel pressured, and was proactive, things went much, much more smoothly than we ever could have hoped, and much better than they would have otherwise.

As it would turn out, her assisting Steph and grooming her to take over when it came to Michelle would have their own unforeseen positive consequences.

IX: I AM MY SISTERRS' MOM - Mar., 1988-Aug., 1992

1. Maternal Instincts – Mar. 1988-Mar. 1990

Danny - Aug. 1, 1988:

Jesse could have done it, I'm sure. He loved helping the girls with lots of things. He'd changed quickly from the rebel uncle who came a few times a year and never stayed into the one who loved spending time with the girls and helping with everything. It was a change that could only have come from a true change on the inside.

However, D.J.'s role as a mother figure was so tender and giving, I had to admire her. She spent time with just her friends this summer, of course. But, she loved pushing Michelle in her stroller, going to the park with her, and so on. There was frustration that Michelle wasn't old enough to talk and play more complex things - Steph felt that same frustration - but D.J. was learning how to do little things that meant a lot.

That's one reason why it was so rewarding to let her entertain Michelle in the morning. That was one of those times when she could show off that tender, nurturing side. It's one of the special things that makes females female, though I liked to think I had one, too. I loved to give hugs, and spread that storge love all around.

Becky:

I'd been working as a field reporter for over half a year when the station manager approached me. "How would you like to work on a talk show with Danny?" he asked.

I was thrilled - of course I would. That was my real goal in media, although I was certainly willing to do any kind of reporting. Sports had been a great entry level position in a bigger market. But now, I could do what I really loved.

Danny – Talk Show Plans Learned Early:

Normally, I wouldn't have been told they wanted to make me a talk show host and pair me with someone till they had their person. Now, they had her in Becky. So, I was told days later that they wanted to have Becky and me as hosts.

My main love was sports, but I'd always loved my college talk show, too college. I'd soon get up early so I could be down at the station, which meant D.J. wasn't waking up to get Michelle up as often. However, she'd still grown accustomed to waking up then. It was still good, while I showered and dressed, to ask D.J. to take her in, anyway.

Joey – Sat. Aug. 6 – Safe Sitters, Grief and Other Counseling:

Danny enrolled D.J. in a "Safe Sitters" course to help her be a better helper just after she turned eleven. He was always very protective, so he'd have encouraged her to take first aid training and so on, anyway. In fact, she'd been in on one he took each year last fall. This year, however, she was all by herself, and really enjoyed it. She learned about discipline, keeping one's cool, first aid, entertaining children, and so on.

Much of this she knew, but it was good to go over. Danny would have had her doing this anyway, just because she'd be getting near babysitting age. However, it was a great course, and Steph and Michelle each took it, too, when they were eleven, which is the minimum age to take the course.

Danny finally called the minister to take him up on the offer for counseling today. This past week, we went camping and he thought about bringing his dust buster along to clean the ground. He realized it was really silly, and that he was just trying to take his

mind off of Pam. I think D.J. helped encourage him to go this one time.

However, it wasn't for another half year or so that he really started to talk with the minister in earnest, and even then, it was sporadic. It was, however, enough to ensure that he didn't have any major problems. The time his mom moved down and he noticed how much he was trying to please her was one of those points when Danny talked to him about it. D.J. starting to punish Michelle was another.

The problem was mostly his; we dealt with it well otherwise. We never went in en masse with him, though a time or two we talked after a service if we went. That was for encouragement more than anything, though. His personality was one that had a very hard time dealing with change of any type. He slowly learned how to get over that.

Stephanie – Mon., Aug. 15 – Terrible Twos, Advice on Team Captains:

Dad called a family meeting today. He was pretty nervous as he started to talk about the "Terrible Twos" which Dr. Landress warned us about.[451]

"I'm just not ready for this," he said.

Uncle Jesse offered to talk to her about it, but D.J. reminded him what she'd gone forward for. "Oh, right, Deej; you can talk to her."

D.J. couldn't help but laugh. "Uncle Jesse, talk to her. I'll just be disciplining, if Dad doesn't." Dad let out a big breath. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine. I just…need a little time to get used to it, that's all."

I asked after we talked about potty training and other issues what D.J. thought we should do. "Dad's just a little anxious. We'll pray, and if I'm supposed to do it, I guess it'll just happen." She was grateful that she had their support, because truth be told, she wasn't relishing having to put anyone in timeout.

Danny – Mon, Sept. 5, 1988 – Early to Rise:

I had awakened bright and early, as I'd been doing for the last couple weeks. If Becky hadn't already been here, the station would have had a longer interview process and we might not have started "Wake Up, San Francisco" till this month or next. As it was, we'd started doing our morning show a couple weeks early.

"Hey, there's Daddy's little angel," I said as I entered the nursery. As I changed her diaper, Jesse entered. "Don't tell me, Jess. You're going to gloat because this is Labor Day, and unlike those of us in the media, you don't have to go in to work."

"You said it," he said with the glee of a kid who had off of school. He would soon quit his dad's business entirely and turn to writing jingles.

"So, why bother getting up?"

"Well, there is this lady you carpool with," he said with a grin. When he broke his arms, she was around to help a lot. She started to warm up to Jesse then. They shared their first kiss after an impromptu hug once he got his casts off a month ago.

I already had my suit and tie on; I handed Michelle to Jesse.

"Beep," she said, as she pressed Jesse's nose.

"Did D.J. or Stephanie teach you that?" When she said "D.J.," he replied, "Wait a minute, you gotta say that, you just turned two. You can't pronounce 'Stephanie' yet." He

[451] With Michelle having an August birthday, this warning comes earlier. A different doctor is mentioned in one book, which is plausible if the doctor didn't have room that month to get her in, but just as likely is that it's another one in that group Michelle happened to see soon before that book takes place.

happily took her downstairs, pondering the direction his life had taken.

Jesse – On raising the girls, hugging, etc.:

I enjoyed being around Michelle, just like with the other girls it helped bring a tender side out in me.

Danny's tender side always showed, of course. Like those in some cultures, he could naturally hug everyone with nothing sensual about it – I was just glad he never kissed like the French, which seemed really gross to me.

I had warmed up to the point where I could let that tender part of me show; it's a part that wasn't there before, just like my love of hanging out and doing family stuff. Raising the girls helped me to develop that. We're supposed to be kind, tender hearted, and compassionate, though I was thankful hugging was optional.

However, as tender and loving as I had become, it wasn't like it would have been with me getting up all the time. After all, I always got up to go in to work with my dad's business, whereas Danny would sleep in because he would do the sports later.

Instead, for about a year, it had been mostly D.J. doing that. There were a few mornings I did just because I was going in to work, or D.J. was on a sleepover, or later when she'd get out of her crib and come upstairs to see what was going on. But, I often let her handle it. It wasn't just because of her devotion, but also because it seems like women are just usually more nurturing.

So, instead of me turning into a real nurturer with Michelle, D.J. did the nurturing, and probably did a better job than I would have. Though I grew to like hugging.

D.J. - Fri., Sept. 9 – Filling Pam's shoes a bit more:

Even though Dad was getting up earlier to go in and do his morning show, I still ended up with Michelle beside me often; because he had to shower and prepare, or just because Michelle insisted.

"Is this my Strawberry Shortcake?" I asked lovingly. Michelle giggled; she loved that nickname. I tucked her in beside me and rubbed her back. "It's only 6:20. I don't have to be up for school for another 25 minutes. Let's close our eyes."

"No." I pretended to snore. "Get up." She tried to pull me out of bed, and almost fell off herself till I caught her; I'd had one eye open. Since pulling failed, she tried to push me out instead.

However, purely by accident, one of her little feet impacted against my chest. "Ow! No, Michelle, that hurt," I exclaimed. We'd been lucky so far, but before I knew it I had sat her in a little chair and scolded her, telling her to stay for hurting me.

"Deej, what happened?" Dad asked abruptly as he poked his head in the door. He'd gotten Michelle up, and was heading to the bathroom.

I explained the situation. "I've been catching little things for a while; I figured it was time to start punishing her."

"Deej…you didn't have to do that…look at how she's crying. It was just an accident, I'm sure she didn't mean it."

"Dad, I know it was an accident. But, she needs to learn hurting others is wrong." I grinned sadly. "It's the toughest part of being team captain, telling her 'no.'"

He nodded wistfully. "I know. Look, Deej, we've talked about what's expected of her; and, you've done a great job. It's just, well…"

"Dad, either I do it, or you have to."

He held up a hand. "I know. Believe me, I'd rather it…be you." He finished quite lowly, obviously thinking about Mom. "Deej, you've bonded so much, especially this summer. I can't find the words for how proud I am; and that's really unusual, to find me speechless." We chuckled. Michelle now simply sat there sadly, with her head down. "I just don't want you to feel like you have to do this. I'd start sometime."

Stephanie had awakened and was listening in. As I let Michelle out of her timeout and cuddled her, Steph piped up, "She hasn't put me in timeout yet."

"That's my job; D.J.'s just working with Michelle till I'm ready."

He didn't say when he'd be ready. He didn't seem to know. But, at least he didn't look like he was ready to cry or anything. If I'd just had to react when things got too bad, he might have, but now, he seemed more comfortable, somehow. Like maybe my being proactive was easing him into life without Mom.

Danny – Developing a game plan:

We called a family meeting once Michelle had gone to bed. The purpose was to announce that D.J. was now putting her in timeout. D.J. and I had discussed the "game plan," as it was termed, earlier, and everyone agreed to chip in. From now on, if she did something naughty, we would tell D.J., at least when she got home. Jesse didn't mind that; after our talk last spring he was ready. I didn't like it, but I just kept hoping I'd never have to tattle on my sweet little princess.

Jesse:

At two, it was easier for Michelle to go to Danny or D.J. for stuff than to worry about coming up to the third floor. It was so much easier with her on that floor. Truth be told, I had a very hard time saying "no" to Michelle.

D.J. could say "no" quite easily to her, though she let her do cool stuff, too. Well, cool stuff to a two-year-old. This was one of those things where I felt sad, but Michelle had to learn she couldn't always get what she wanted. It was good she was learning that now, but I would have indulged her a lot. It was rough, but I could accept how D.J. was doing things when I envisioned Pam. I told D.J. if she hadn't listened after I told her not to do something. At least I could imagine Pam putting her in timeout.

Becky and I went out to eat early that evening. I really wanted us to be a lot further along, but we still did well. She liked me a little too, after all.

Becky – D.J. Tanner, Frontier "Mom," No Trouble with the Horse:

D.J. performed fabulously. She handled things just like one of those frontier girls a century earlier. She seemed more open with her dad, too. It's hard for teens or preteens to talk to their parents sometimes, but this let her feel like he was an equal, and would understand her a little more.

For instance, a few weeks later, she asked Danny if they could get a horse. She might not have otherwise. She had time to ride, but not a lot. She was disappointed when he said no - she thought he'd agree since she handled things as team captain so well.

She told him this horse was available. He promised to try to find someone to buy it, and if he couldn't, to at least find someone to ride more with her.

He told me about the problem, and since I loved horses, I bought the horse -

Rocket - instead, and everyone was happy. They communicated openly before, but it seemed like D.J.'s increased attempts at maturity were really having a positive impact on everyone. Sometimes, it just takes someone willing to take the lead.

She was growing up a lot faster, but with her mom gone, she would have had to, anyway. Now, at least she felt like she was in control of that part of her life, and not as frustrated. It meant less free time, but she still had it. She'd make up for it by not having kids herself till her middle thirties, with lots of fun and freedom before then.

Stephanie - Sat., Oct. 8 – Rare Timeout:

Michelle didn't need punished much. It was more like two or three a week for a couple weeks next spring. I was told this was the "terrible twos," though, when they got into lots of stuff. And, after a short time, the problems subsided.

I hardly ever got timeouts anymore. Today, I did only because I was too tempted to play with Dad's new computer. It was just the usual ten minutes in my room. I knew better, and I even apologized and started to go to my room on my own when Dad caught me. However, some things were just too enticing. I didn't do it any more, though. I was mad at myself for having done it once.

I'm still a bit dumbfounded, as I think about it, that Dad got a computer that early. It helped him, but without an office, who knows how long it would have been.

Danny - Oct. 11 – Danny "tells" on Michelle:

Michelle painted on her dresser. I kept trying to redirect her. She wouldn't listen, and even painted me a bit, so I took the brush and walked her to D.J.'s room.

I struggled at first - I didn't want to tell on my little princess.

Thankfully, D.J. took one look at me and asked, "Did Michelle do that?"

"Well…yes, actually. And, on her dresser," I said reluctantly.[452] I knew what I'd been advised, but it was still very hard for me. However, one thing made me do it more than anything - my oldest daughter was truly dedicated to this, and I wanted to support her. This was no halfhearted attempt to help a little. This was true commitment.

"All right, young lady, you know where you go when you're bad!" Michelle was already downcast, even before D.J. said that. D.J. was so motherly. Michelle hated being yelled at and sat in the timeout chair. Now, it was in the corner.

My only consolation was, somehow, it felt like Pam was still there.

D.J.:

I honestly thought that would get Dad to start punishing her himself, but it didn't. Her painting on things hadn't been a problem for long, though.

Maybe if I hadn't been so proactive, there might have been more problems. However, Michelle not only stopped doing that, she began obeying Dad better. He'd bring Michelle to me whenever she did something naughty and needed a timeout or, later, some privilege removed. After a few months, he'd even gotten up the nerve to warn her that I'd put her in timeout if she was about ready to do something naughty.

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[452] Before the incident in TV's "Beach Boy Bingo" timewise, but Michelle is also older by a couple months because of the earlier birthday. Danny would still struggle, but he'd at least start the habit of telling D.J. on her, even if at first he doesn't want to. D.J.'s able to babysit

Jesse – Oct. 12 – Eating New Foods, etc.:

Michelle was learning to like more and more foods. She'd loved olives since last year, when Danny was working a fair amount on shows dealing with Oakland's first baseball playoffs since 1981. Today, it was tuna.[453] She learned to like these since she'd get an extra cookie or something; of course, chocolate cake was her favorite.

Whatever dessert was, it was a great reward. So were Joey's antics as he hammed it up so she would try more things. She was never that picky an eater, though.

Joey – Nov. 19 – Stephanie's snooping solved:

I liked to encourage the girls with fun stuff. Stephanie was close to me because I loved cartoons, and she could relate to that easily, though Jesse would still help quite a bit. D.J. and Steph, though, were becoming more like friends than mother and daughter, because Steph was usually pretty well behaved.

Stephanie did peek in D.J.'s diary a couple times, so she planned a way to get her back, and also teach her a lesson. She was still really tricky, and would rather be playful with this kind of thing than actually lecture Stephanie. She had enough mothering duties with Michelle, and Danny didn't want her feeling burned out. He felt lucky that the other girls were so well behaved overall, despite little things like all kids did.

So, D.J. sent Michelle after her. She wanted Stephanie to see what it felt like to have someone go after her stuff, and she knew Michelle would insist on grabbing Mr. Bear. It was quite comical when Stephanie struggled with that.

A few weeks later, they made a truce. D.J. helped teach Michelle not to undress Mr. Bear and not to try to put her doll dresses on him. In return, Stephanie stayed out of her diary. So, Michelle never picked up that habit, either.

Danny – Mr. Bear:

Stephanie was very attached to Mr. Bear. Sometimes she tried to sound grown up, but even then, she hedged a lot; she said she'd give Mr. Bear to Michelle when Michelle got married.[454] She didn't mean it, though. That was an impossibly long time from the present to a kid her age, but also, he was a real comfort object and friend. Her saying hat could have been a bit of Jesse, or maybe it was just trying not to show how much she really valued a stuffed animal, though she played with them quite often. It rubbed off on Michelle, who was doing so quite a bit even at age eight and nine.[455]

Stephanie – Sun., Nov. 27 – Growing up fast:

"Tephy, wake up!" I rubbed my eyes, getting the eye crispies out, and saw Michelle grinning broadly while sitting on top of me. "Horsey "

"Michelle, just because you're sitting on me like a horse doesn't mean you're getting a horseyback ride." She continued to insist, and I made her lay down next to me. "Come on, we need our sleep." I looked at the clock. "Okay, it's 7:40, but still..."

"Daddy back to bed."

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[453] She loves olives by the end of season 5, same with tuna, but is never shown to be too picky; therefore, it's likely she learned to like them rather early.

[454] "Three Men and Another Baby"

[455] She has numerous fashion shows and does other things with them in several books. While this is true of TV Michelle, from the many she gets elsewhere and the collection in "The Trouble With Danny," it's likely much more true in books, as she doesn't mind "kid stuff" in books.

"Oh, yeah, 'cause we were all up late at that concert."[456] I told her about all it. However, even after talking for twenty minutes, I still couldn't get her to sleep. I grudgingly chose to get up with her; Uncle Jesse was up by then, too.

I grew to like Michelle coming in to cuddle with me, but it took a while. I missed Mom. Some days, I'd look over at Michelle and D.J. talking happily or playing peek-a-boo with Michelle's blanket, and I'd ask myself, can it be like it was when I was three, four years old, and I'd wake Mom and Dad up early? In a way I wanted to join Michelle over there, but in another way, I was scared. Scared it wouldn't be anything like that, and that if I tried I'd just feel sad that Mom wasn't around.

My maternal instincts just hadn't been built up as much. However, mornings like this helped me start, and after a while gave me courage.

D.J. - Dec. 3. 1988 – Why "Uncle Joey" in some books:

I got to thinking, as I talked to some people. Since I was "team captain," would I want Michelle to learn to call Joey Uncle Joey? It was more respectful, and Dad agreed it might help Joey feel a little more comfortable. Joey was having trouble firmly enforcing limits, after all. I hadn't been too disrespectful toward him, so he didn't ground me, but I had forgotten to call when I was out after curfew last night. He told me I couldn't watch TV for several days, and talked about my responsibility as team captain, since I was supposed to be dedicated to being like a mother.

I didn't like hearing that, but the more I thought about it, he was right. We had a long talk as a family today about that, and it led to my idea.

Dad argued that Jesse's band members, family friends, and all the girlfriends Uncle Jesse brought home had been known by their first name. Any of Dad's would, too, unless they became "Mom" decades from now. Of course, it could be sooner, but the way Dad went, we all figured it would be the year 2300 before he'd even propose.

Joey:

Being "Uncle Joey" intrigued me. I liked the sound of it, in a way, but I honestly didn't feel much like an adult. I'd had so much fun with the girls so far, including before Pam died, that it was hard to see myself as an authority figure. I loved being a kid and not worrying about that stuff. Then again, so had D.J..

D.J. said I had done okay, though she wouldn't have liked being grounded. Her main concern was Michelle, so we decided the "Uncle" part was optional.[457] I doubt this would have happened if I'd been tougher and grounded her, or if she wasn't so committed - Pam had never cared. But, D.J. was trying hard to help me, too.

Sometimes, D.J. just tried a little too hard to be the best.

Jesse – Dec. 26 – Surprising Himself, Impulsive Visit to Nebraska:

I figured I must be nuts; I spent Christmas in Nebraska.

Becky flew home to Nebraska for Thanksgiving. For Christmas I invited her to Graceland. She wouldn't go. We'd been a couple for three months, and known each other almost a year. That wasn't a long time to be a couple; I wouldn't have had to go with her,

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[456] "Beach Boy Bingo"

[457] Later Michelle books especially tend to call him Uncle Joey, and others do at times, as books try to be more conservative. Michelle likely gets used to calling him that, while the others try.

and she didn't expect me to, though she invited me. I was so impulsive, if it hadn't been for the Beach Boys concert that weekend, I might have flown out then.

I was always impulsive. I had planned to go to the family reunion, but at the last minute, I decided to go with Becky once the weather cleared.[458] I bought a ticket on the connecting flight to Nebraska, once I knew the others were going home.

"What are you doing on this plane? I thought you didn't want to come?"

"Changed my mind." Becky couldn't help but laugh. "Hey, you know, those rent a car places don't have any motorcycles; I called to see about renting one once we get there," I told her. She said once I smelled the farms, I might be glad I hadn't.

We got there late in the evening on Christmas. Becky introduced me to everyone; including her brother who did a good Elvis. Her parents were there; they wouldn't have been next Thanksgiving or Christmas. I told her later I couldn't believe how much fun I could actually have talking to a former rodeo rider. They do have some similarities with us rock and rolling motorcycle lovers. They hadn't liked the thought of me at first, but they could tell I was starting to mellow.[459]

Her dad said if I got serious with her, I had to be willing to settle down more, but he also recalled how he'd been before he met her mom. He said I had good potential.

Danny – "Dad Talks" Numbered, Leading Family Fun:

Our family loved to laugh and have fun. Another thing we talked about was how they would refer to "Dad talk number 17" or whatever number it was. Truthfully, I enjoyed laughing at it myself sometimes. I didn't always know how to relate to girls. I knew they saw me in a different way than boys might, and so I started to give them random numbers. I even remarked that one number was wrong because the number was actually the one for proper etiquette at a luau.[460]

That was fine, as long as they were laughing with me. Our rules were looser than some, but the important thing was, they still respected me. If they hadn't, then it would have been time to stop on both of our parts.

That's why I was hesitant; they already respect Joey. He'd become like a father figure. In fact, one of the kids in Stephanie's playgroup, which became Michelle's,[461] said last year that, "A Joey is an adult who tells jokes all the time." It was like a title.

Still, D.J. was team captain. As long as she wasn't going to make it mandatory, but let the girls ease into it, it was okay by me.[462] This was an important lesson for her, too; a lesson in accommodating others, even though it isn't your first choice. Although, when we talked about it, I didn't give that "Dad talk" a number.

Stephanie - Wed., Jan. 17, 1989 - Not Quite Like Mom:

This was another of those mornings. I woke up early, so excited to be seven. I was

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[458] "Our Very First Christmas Show"

[459] "The Wedding," with the reason they don't see them the next year explained in the TV Universe part under a "13 Candles" footnote. They'd have a negative view at first because of a picture she'd send of him with long hair, but they'd be impressed by the end. An impulsive Jesse would do this, as on TV, he wanted to get married after only 4-5 months.

[460] Actually said in one episode, with numbers mentioned or thought about in both universes

[461] "Joey's Place," Joey was usually the one to watch them the year after Pam died

[462] As it wasn't; while numerous books do, not every one has Michelle call him Uncle Joey. There doesn't seem to be a general pattern, but something has to explain why she does some; this is best.

full of energy normally, but this time, I felt a bit bolder, being older. I decided to try crawling in with D.J. like I would Mom when younger. Why not? D.J. told me a few days ago, when I was feeling left out because I wasn't the oldest or the cutest,[463] that I had a big role to play. When she was busy, I could take over as a Mother's helper of sorts. Just like she had helped Mom sometimes.

I walked over to D.J.'s bed and crawled in, trying to get comfortable as D.J. awakened, wished me a happy birthday, and asked why I was there.

"No, I didn't have a nightmare. I just…well, I wanted to try it out."

D.J. put an arm around me. She could tell I was let down. "Not like when Mom was here, huh?" I shook my head. "I know I don't measure up to Mom's standards. But, we can still make the best of it, like when Dad rescheduled our Disneyland reservations last year. He told me he'd have to, anyway, since the fog caused us to be unable to fly. It was either that or a full refund."

"So, would we have gotten all our money back?" She nodded. "That's a tough one. Would I want Disneyland or more toys?"

D.J. snickered. "That is a tough one. I think Dad just figured you'd want the chance to go there."

As I pondered the concept, Dad walked in with Michelle. I got a big hug and a kiss. "Give Stephanie your present, honey. Can you say 'Happy Birthday?'"

After something that resembled it, I looked at the gift. My smile had returned quickly. "Wow, it's so colorful." I didn't ask what it was – at her age it didn't matter.

Dad handed me a present – a book, which I quickly unwrapped. "Your Uncle Jesse started breakfast. I know you're going to tell Michelle how proud you are of Michelle sleeping past six, Deej. It's great to see you exercising your maternal instinct. Because that's one exercise video I hope Richard Simmons never does."

"Yeah." D.J. thought about all the little things she was doing to help. She might not be Mom, but she tried to build great memories and talk with us about lots of things.

Soon, I was doing Michelle's hair, and D.J. was doing mine. And I was singing "You Are My Sunshine" to Michelle. "I still don't know how to decide which one I'd want, Deej," I said after a couple minutes.

"You mean Disneyland or more toys?"

"Yeah. How do adults do it?"

"Well, Steph, Uncle Jesse makes his decisions based on what feels good. He figures, if you can do it, do it." Which would not be the best thing as far as teaching Michelle good self-control, although he wasn't the rebel he had been. I remembered some of the stories he'd told, just as he'd told D.J. some interesting tales. "As far as Joey - Uncle Joey - that still sounds weird, huh?" I concurred. "I think he bases it on whatever cartoon character best fits the mood."

I laughed. "That sounds about right, Deej. What about Dad and you?"

"Well, Dad always does what he thinks will be in our best interests, like he wants you to know we'll get to Disneyland sometime so it helps you feel things will work out somehow, even if they don't at that moment. And me? Well…I guess I'm starting to do that a little, too." D.J. stopped for a moment. "It's freaky. I didn't want to tell you your first day of Kindergarten, because I wanted to feel independent of him, but my advice to you then about staying there was just what Dad said to me when I found I was placed in

[463] Middle Age Crazy"

the smart class and Kimmy was in another fifth grade class."[464]

"It was?" I racked my brain for a moment. "Whatever you said, it was good."

D.J. laughed out loud. "I'm glad our talks are so memorable," she teased. "Anyway, I didn't want to copy him. Still, since I've been up for Michelle more, things have happened naturally that make me think about you guys a lot more, about what you need. And, that makes me want to be more mature, and use moments like this. They're what Dad calls 'teachable moments,' when we just spend time together and I teach you and Michelle things without really trying."

D.J. reminded Michelle to say "thank you" to me for doing her hair, and she did.

"You're welcome, Michelle. You know, Deej, I guess I am glad we went to Disneyland after all. But, I don't think anyone could fill Mom's shoes."

D.J. silently agreed. She didn't think she could ever fill Mom's, either.

Jesse – Jan. 18 – Doctor Sees Progress:

Stephanie talked a lot, so it wasn't hard to get her started on how D.J. was like a mom, and the fun things they'd done the previous day.

"That's wonderful. How is Michelle doing?"

"She's super. Dad hasn't punished her yet, but if she does something bad, he takes her right to D.J. and says she needs a timeout."

Dr. Landress raised an eyebrow. On the bright side, he said Michelle likely saw Danny and D.J. as equal authorities, like two parents. "How is that working out?"

"Pretty well," Danny said. He described how things were going, and that Michelle's behavior was good, though she tested some, like all twos. "D.J. suggested I talk to our minister when I tried to take a dust buster camping, after Michelle's checkup." He couldn't help but snicker. "I guess I've been missing Pam a bit."

"It would appear so. Are your brother in law or Joey disciplining?"

"D.J. is the only one to use timeout. But, they're very good at taking her to our team captain for help, and backing her up, if she's there."

He smiled at the term. "Mr. Tanner, we are not talking about fining a player for messing up; we are talking about teaching a child right from wrong." Danny explained what the minister had suggested – to make sure Michelle knew he was the boss. "I see. It's okay for now, if you are having trouble. It is different than if D.J. were to only react. However, this can't continue forever."

"I know, Doc; I just can't help but think of her as a baby. Even after what you said we need to do," he said. "Even after seeing D.J. still has that bond."

Dr. Landress had compassion on him. "If you are struggling with the loss of your wife, I completely understand. Perhaps you should talk to your minister. You exercise most of your parental rights. It's wonderful that D.J. is so dedicated; I can very plausibly see that in her. But, you should be doing this yourself, too. The less discipline she is forced to do, the more she can help in other areas, mold her 'Strawberry Shortcake' into a wonderful young lady. However, she is developing a very close bond with Michelle, it seems." That bond with Michelle was confirmed at D.J.'s checkup.

Joey – Mar. 3 – Declaration Rock, sports, girls' other activities:

The girls didn't visit Pam's grave, except when we all went on Mother's Day.

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[464] "The First Day of School"

They wanted to keep her memory alive, and thinking of her in Heaven wasn't as easy when you looked down. Danny went more, like her birthday or something.

Looking up was fun, though, and this allowed them to continue a practice begun when D.J. was little. In the park there was this one rock that Pam had dubbed Declaration Rock. It wasn't really big, but to a little kid standing on it it felt like they were on top of the world, as they were a over a foot off the ground, and at Michelle's age she had to be lifted up to stand on it, though she could climb up there.

Anyway, Pam and D.J. found it on a walk one day, and D.J. climbed up on it and started shouting. Pam felt it would be a great tradition to take the girls whenever they had a major accomplishment. It was easier to do something like this to feel closer to Pam than it was to visit a grave, except for flowers a few times.

This time, the occasion was "No more diapers!" as Michelle declared. After I'd walked there with the girls, I just milled around and watched Michelle watch bugs while the older girls kicked a soccer ball back and forth.

"So, are you going to be a cheerleader, Deej?" Stephanie asked.

"You mean in Junior High? Nah, I don't think so." She kicked the ball. "Kathy Santoni wants to be, but I'm more of a people person."

"What about soccer?"

"That's like asking you if you'd like to do tree climbing," D.J. joked.

"Of course I would."

D.J. shook her head. "Well, I guess they might have soccer now, but I think of that as an activity for grade school kids. I won't have the time."

"True. Plus, you won't ruin any more sweaters."

"Yeah, and it's a good thing I watch you, or else you might have tried to get that sweater for me last month without a credit card," D.J. teased.[465]

Stephanie looked downcast for a moment as the ball rolled past her. Michelle ran over and kicked it as she said gratefully, "Yeah, thanks, Deej. I'm glad you watch out for me. Here, Michelle, over this way. Kick it toward us."

I got involved in the confused scrimmage, too. D.J. didn't play quite as much in middle school or high school. Steph dabbled in sports in high school, but she was more a people person, too, her people being babysitting charges. Had D.J. not helped mold her a little, she might have tried cheerleading a time or two. D.J. wasn't as involved in school dramas, either, because she was busier with her sisters. That's one of those things she did a fair amount in college, even joining our local theater for a little while in her twenties, one of those things she hadn't as a teen.

Michelle was a good athlete, too, like Steph. She probably wasn't quite as good, but that was okay, as she'd have lots of other interests.[466] As we kicked the ball around – and Michelle just sort of ran around doing whatever with it – we could already see a little of her soccer form. She didn't do any cheerleading, except for fun with a friend's pee wee team one year. However, she enjoyed sports into her high school years, though she had lots of other interests, whereas she might have focused more on sports otherwise. The

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[465] Most felt "Little Shop of Sweaters" wouldn't happen the same way. The sweater likely gets shredded, with D.J. telling Danny before taking it back, but some feel D.J. would try things on her own. These feel she's watching Steph closer, though, so Steph doesn't take a sweater.

[466] Baseball/softball and soccer, each in several. Though "My Almost Perfect Plan" is in the TV Universe, she could make the area all-star team in soccer in the BU, but not a traveling team in the spring; no room on the calendar, and she'd be too overscheduled with the presidency, too.

main one here would be horseback riding after grade school, and that was just for fun. She was also on the junior varsity team in soccer in high school, as a reserve, and if she'd pushed herself more on that would have made varsity. She and Steph also enjoyed the stage, but didn't do much after middle school, though they were in a few plays like D.J. would have been had she not been so proactive.

They always had lots of free, fun time to themselves; I helped make sure the girls weren't overscheduled in things. But, with Jesse as an influence, Michelle's free time especially would have been a lot more unstructured at this age.

Becky – June 3, 1989 – Michelle's New Bed, etc.:

Michelle got out of her crib on her own for the first time a few days ago. The guys went and picked out a bed for her, and Jesse helped her get used to it.

Jesse had to admit that he liked sleeping in some mornings, instead of Michelle screaming her head off till someone got her.[467] Being in the attic still let him have a great relationship with the girls, though. He loved all the time he spent with them.

Now, it was easier, though, because he and Joey could work on things themselves without interruption. For instance, Danny had his own blank tapes that the girls had known for years they could record on in his office. So, there was never any problem with one of their tapes accidentally getting erased. Not that D.J. would do it, she thought about what she was doing a lot more, but Kimmy was still there.[468]

Today, Jesse and I had one of our little disagreements. We actually talked about getting married, we were having so much fun, but we were beyond the "let's just act crazy" phase of our relationship. We'd learned to start talking things out.

I don't think we really would have eloped, but you never knew with him; we might have been distracted then, anyway, since Joey won that jackpot while D.J. and Steph were watching Michelle and swimming during swim practice.[469] While Joey wanted to buy silly stuff, we used it to move the recording studio and expand it since it was pretty cramped for Jesse upstairs.

D.J. - June 16 - On Love, Jesse & Becky, etc.:

Anyone can love a sleeping baby. It's when they're into everything that you learn what true love is. Michelle was never into lots of stuff – not like some – though she got quite a few timeouts in her worst month. However, I was rapidly learning what love was.

It was all about self-sacrifice. Today, for instance, I naturally offered to watch my sisters because Uncle Jesse and Joey left to do an ad. They were still very important, don't get me wrong. But, it's like I'd taken on this role where I was like a mom. And, while Michelle wasn't yet three, I could be a positive influence and do fun things with her. I could do more with Steph, of course, but it was still fun.

It wasn't just fun - I felt like I was contributing. I was helping them grow. I could see little things and know that I had a part in them. That made me feel so special!

That seemed like an adult feeling, that excitement at each little thing. And, I was

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[467] "Granny Tanny" – Michelle is about the age she was in that episode. Most kids try a bit earlier, but this shows that she was more timid, not a risk taker. A few thought she climbed out a bit earlier here, though, because Jesse might get up to get her faster than the others would.

[468] "Fogged In," both very likely why that part of the episode never happens in books.

[469] "Luck Be A Lady" – Girls would be with Michelle with D.J. more proactive. Jesse and Becky know each other almost a year longer, and most figure they would be beyond the phase they were in here.

feeling it now. But, that's what always being tender and compassionate does. When you keep giving that love away, you get plenty back. It's a special type of love, the kind Mom probably had in mind when she'd say to give away a smile.

It's a mindset, really, an inner voice that tells you you're helping someone and that that's a great thing. Like with anything, when you feed it, it'll grow. And, it brings a satisfaction far beyond what doing things for yourself can ever bring.

That's what Uncle Jesse meant by filling holes in his heart he didn't know were there. He hadn't fed that part of him, though I think women have it more than men. Since he'd come here, he had learned how to do that with us, and with Becky. He tried to think of her, but that came less easily for him because he was used to feeding the selfish part. As they drew closer, they learned to talk everything out, and not argue as much.

Jesse – Still helping:

In a way, D.J. wasn't just helping herself or the girls. She was helping me, too.

It wasn't just things like giving Michelle a bath, playing with her, or whatever. It was D.J.'s attitude. Kids can sense if someone's real. The girls could tell D.J. had grown to love her duties. And, I was seeing how awesome it could be to think about someone ahead of myself, even more than I would have otherwise; and I would have a fair amount. A positive attitude can really rub off. That was good, 'cause Joey and I still messed up, like telling about our "sink the sub" games.[470] It helped me with Becky, too.

Danny – Jun. 18, 1989 - Not Saying "Dude," "Duh" in books:

Michelle hated rude, bossy people by the time she got to school.[471] And, it started here, as D.J. nipped a potential problem in the bud.

D.J. gathered us for a team meeting after Michelle went to bed. She said, "This is especially for Uncle Jesse." He figured he was in trouble. He gave her one of those "what did I do?" looks that I so remember him giving Pam at times.

Nobody could find the talking stick which indicated who had the floor.[472] We later found Michelle had carried it off, like two-year-olds do, and put it in Joey's closet. Since everyone interrupted last time anyway, we didn't worry about it.

"You're not in any trouble, Uncle Jesse," D.J. assured him. "It's just that some of Michelle's language has gotten a little rude. Not much yet, I mean, she isn't quite three, but this is what being proactive is about. I'm working on getting her not to call people 'dude' or say 'duh,' but we need to be a team."

Jesse knew where it came from. "I know, my band talks like that a lot, don't they. Look, I already got 'em to never swear when we're watching Michelle."

"Please, Uncle Jesse," D.J. begged.

"Oh, all right," he said with a sigh. "If it means that much to you, I guess we can try not to; but I think it'd d just be easier to tell her 'no.'"

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[470] "The Substitute Teacher," a book that takes place sometime in fourth, and proves "To Joey With Love" never happens in the book universe since she muses that she's never been sent to the principal, before the sub decides to make her teach and act really ornery to teach her what it was like. With her personality she wouldn't have been, anyway, this is just more proof. This book was just her being like Stephanie calling Walter "Duckface" and so on in both universes.

[471] All books, especially "Dear Michelle" books, which as you'll see in the interlude on books are canon, as similar events could happen in Michelle's class in "Dear Michelle" as in the first 4 Michelle books.

[472] Used in family meeting in "Joey Gets Tough," then not again

"D.J.'s right, though," I pointed out. "She's at the age where she mimics anything we say or do. It might not be as common since you're not a mother figure, but still, if D.J. thinks that's a good way to go, I'm all for it." I gave her a corny salute.

"Dad, I was captain of my soccer team. Team captains don't get saluted," D.J. explained, sensing I was trying too hard to be funny.

"Oh. Right. Sorry." Everyone else agreed with me. We talked about how to encourage good behavior and language more.

Jesse's band did what he said; they weren't perfect, but she almost never said things like that.

D.J. – Jun. 24 – Danny helps end Michelle's "selfish phase":

Because we had a large family and were always sharing, and partly due to her nature, Michelle was pretty unselfish. She went through the typical two-year-old phase, but Dad helped to solve the problem and help her learn to share. We were in danger of Michelle seeing me as more the boss. However, a couple months later, at her checkup, the doctor said Dad and I were co-equals as far as ultimate authority.

Dad worked to set up a playgroup that started around when this phase did. She was sometimes at other homes. She'd been in Steph's old one early.[473] It worked well for the summer, but dissipated once the school year began.

The important thing is, Michelle listened to him, and really had a great bond with him. Not only that, I had built a great bond with Dad, too, because of this. Michelle was learning all about relationships, and her first model of father-daughter relationship was a very close, co-operative one. As Dr. Landress said, something wonderful was coming out of problems. Michelle understood that someday, Dad would be the boss totally, and I'd just be a few steps above "older sister," compared to what most kids knew.

Joey – Aug. 12 – Circus Party:

Michelle had a great party today; Stephanie had even mastered juggling. Uncle Jesse didn't like clowns much, but he did blow up all the balloons. And, we turned him into a clown, anyway, with all the silly string and such.

Michelle would only be a few weeks past three if we started her in preschool; had she been born closer to the early December cutoff date, Danny would have put her in preschool in January instead, at the turn of the semester. He could have done that because that particular preschool was less structured, so you could enter in the middle of the semester. With Kindergarten, he'd have had to put her in in September, when she was still four, even if she was born in November. They had an early December cutoff date.

Stephanie – Aug. 28 – First Day of Preschool, Like Playgroup:

Dad signed her up for preschool. We told her just what it was like. It'd be two hours. She could take a nap. She could decide she didn't like it, if she was scared.

Dad called and said he'd bring her, then said he wouldn't. The school figured he was nervous. Dad dithered, like with his first date after Mom died, till that morning. Then, Michelle ran after us saying, "Wait for me. I wanna go to school!"[474]

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[473] "Breaking Up Is Hard to Do (in 22 Minutes)," she went through that phase before she turned three, and before she went to preschool, so she would here, too.

[474] "Back to School Blues," a bit more verbal here, being three months older. The first date, of course, is

Joey stopped her and said, “Well…I guess it’s up to your dad.”

Dad scooped her up, and cuddled her for a moment. He asked, “Do you really want to go? It’s not with your sisters. It’s in a different place.”

“Yes, Daddy. I wanna have fun!”

Danny sighed. “Well, all right. Just promise me one thing. Don’t meet a boy and get married today. I’m not ready for that yet.”

She was fine. She behaved quite well, like we all did in school. She didn’t have any problems, though she started to miss us a bit near the end just that first day. Dad cried a little coming home, and then cleaned a lot. Uncle Jesse and Joey had more time, and soon Granny Tanner would be back. Granny Tanner often picked her up if they had a really pressing business meeting.

They were always able to take her, though, till she came. That first day, they wouldn’t have been but Dad had taken the day off, just in case Michelle did want to go, and then came home, so Grandma Katsopolis didn’t have to watch her.

Becky - Sept. 1, 1989:

Jesse and I had known each other for over a year and a half. We’d had major disagreements and thought about breaking up, but lately we’d begun discussing our differences a lot more. He was still totally wild about Elvis, but he was starting to learn to see my side of things better. And, I was willing to listen to him more, too.

Today, the horse he was riding reared back and toppled him off, but after we talked a while, sometimes a little loudly, he agreed that he wouldn’t mind riding as long as it was with me, now that D.J. had me to ride with her.[475]

There could have been big problems if I’d only come when they started “Wake Up, San Francisco” eight or nine months later. We’d had the chance, at this point, to determine how to settle differences rather well. We realized we liked each other, even though we had such totally different interests at times. We didn’t have to do everything the other did; but we started to learn how to enjoy our time together.

D.J. and Stephanie were closer, too. Stephanie had misgivings about D.J. handing her more responsibility with Michelle. D.J. was still the only one disciplining, but she was starting Junior High. So, Steph was taking more time to play with Michelle and so on. D.J. also hoped to tone Stephanie down a little when it came to Kimmy.

D.J. - Sept. 8 – Helping Jesse, Stephanie, and Kimmy not tease so much:

“Uncle Jesse, do you have a minute?”

He came down from his attic apartment and walked into our room, expecting to see Michelle. I was teaching Michelle how to be polite and respectful, and she was listening well. Instead, it was Stephanie and Kimmy with me this time.

“Hey, hairboy, been walking near any bird feeders lately?” Kimmy cracked.

Uncle Jesse sighed. Steph was in this tree-climbing contest with a couple friends a few days earlier. He was distracted from watching her and one of the kids Kimmy and I were babysitting, because this dumb bird decided to use his hair as a toilet. Kimmy couldn’t stop making jokes about that.

“Uncle Jesse, I thought I’d sit with Steph and Kimmy and we’d discuss how all of

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from “Danny’s Very First Date” and would be the same in books.

[475] “Breaking Up Is Hard To Do - in 22 Minutes” - the start of major changes from TV episodes

us felt about being teased." It wasn't nearly as bad as it would have been, but in my proactive role, I wanted to work on eliminating what was there, if I could.

Uncle Jesse didn't want me trying too hard, but also didn't want to face the issue. "Come on, Deej, are you sure you want to do this?"

"Uncle Jesse, last week, after that 'Duckface' incident, I told Steph point blank that Dad might talk about how he doesn't want to think of Michelle growing up, but in reality, his main problem is being so sad about Mom's death yet. He still takes good care of us. I'm just in Mom's role when it comes to disciplining Michelle."

"Sure. And, D.J.'s right," Kimmy spouted, "I wouldn't tease her by calling her 'Mom.' I remember how hard it was to lose Mrs. Tanner," she admitted.

"Exactly." I normally wouldn't have revealed that, but felt like Steph could handle it. Far from living in different worlds, when I entered Junior High I felt like more of an authority figure. Instead of fearing that I might be forced to do more, I was embracing the chance to make a positive impact.

Kimmy – Not teasing much:

I was used to teasing because I got teased a lot with my dumbness and such; it was my way of coping with the world. However, D.J. felt very close to her sisters. So she told me early on not to tease too much. She worked on Stephanie as well; Steph and I never hated each other, though only now did her teasing really die down. I'd just put up with it earlier because she was so young, like D.J. suggested. Now, as D.J. tried to help us understand each other, I got to the point where I could laugh at myself a little faster, too, which I couldn't quite as well before.

Jesse:

D.J. wanted to mold Stephanie into the type who could take her place in two years, when D.J. started high school. Now, D.J. was on the paper and Students Against Driving Drunk with Kimmy, trying to get Kimmy interested in normal pursuits.

I told D.J. later not to push it too much. I felt like she was trying to get Stephanie and Kimmy to be nice too fast. Much of the problem was she considered herself woefully inadequate. So, on something like this, she tried a little too hard.

Stephanie:

I was a little worried when D.J. talked about me replacing her. I'd grown to love all our discussions about Mom with Dad and the guys. I figured I could be a leader to some extent, but how much? I mean, I still loved teasing in a way. I'd called the new boy in our class "Duckface" and even quacked and thrown little pieces of bread at him recently. Kids are like that in second grade sometimes.

Walter and I quickly became friends, however. And, I learned that he was really nice. D.J. used that in follow-up talks to help me feel more empathy for Kimmy. Over time, I didn't tease Kimmy much, and Kimmy didn't tease me.[476]

I still made jokes on the level of our dad's comments about her. However, he never got carried away with his, and I wanted to be like that. Any comment about her intelligence would be more of the "I hope you're joking" variety, except for a few little

[476] Stephanie never teases Kimmy in any book. One would think if this situation was the same, she would a little, even if not too badly. So, over time, there would be a change, and she wouldn't tease like on TV.

things, just like D.J. would do. I mean, even she did it a little, when she was just being honest about something Kimmy said.

I had that compassion in the back of my mind, though. Even without gradually maturing so much over the next few years, I still would never have wanted to drive a wedge between them by revealing how annoyed D.J. said she got with her. I always knew that was wrong, to hurt a friendship that way.

Danny – Advice to D.J. – Little things mean a lot:

I told D.J. that to mold Steph – or even Michelle – she should be subtler, and use "teachable moments" more. That's where most of the influence parents have comes from. It's those little things when you're just hanging around the house, or helping them get dressed when they're little, or at bath time. Jesse was good at reacting and having talks with Michelle. However, he was never good at doing stuff casually. D.J. handled things much more casually and thus effectively, even better than me at times.

That was Pam's gift more than anyone's, and D.J. used it, too. She'd discuss school with Steph, or animals and things with Michelle, and they'd drift into talks about life, whether it was encouraging friends to behave if those friends are going the wrong way, being a leader instead of a follower, how to be nice, and things like that. It came so naturally to her, it was incredible.

Jesse was good with the older ones. With them, discussions usually centered on his growing up and something dumb he did, with what he should have done, or how Pam handled it with him. That was fine with them to tell stories like that, but he only got better slowly with Michelle. With her, he tried to time things so it was convenient for him to demonstrate, like when he tried to explain left and right. He just though, "nice time for me to teach something."[477] D.J. taught Michelle most stuff, though.

Papouli really had that gift. His stories had great meaning. Jesse learned a lot from him despite limited time. D.J. recalled how her mom handled things, and used those memories very well as she served as "team captain."

Jesse – Stpt. 15 – Comet's Entrance, on Steph's Bed:

Boy, was I ever glad I was in the attic today. Well, any door that opened out would have been okay, I guess. Why? Because dogs can't pull doors open.

See, I used one of the same hair care products as Minnie's owner. She smelled them later and really liked them. She'd have gone into my room right away if she'd been able to push the door open.[478] And, had her puppies on my bed.

Instead, Steph gave her the grand tour, and she wasn't interested in Michelle's room, she just sort of followed Stephanie around because she was being nice, and Golden Retrievers follow anyone around. When Steph got to the older girls' room, she naturally sat on her bed and invited Minnie up. The dog was tired and gladly complied. Steph snuggled with the dog a bit, and so when the dog went to have her puppies, she dashed up to where she'd felt most comfortable. Knowing them, they probably would have laid down with her on my bed instead.

Anyway, Steph was all excited. She couldn't wait to call all her friends, and she

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[477] "These Better Not be The Days" teaser – he might try in the Book Universe, but it's not the norm.

[478] As she does in "And They Call It Puppy Love" – a bed's scent attracted your narrator's dog quite a bit as a puppy. This is the most likely explanation for why she pushes that door open.

even told everyone at school the next day. It would have been special enough, but the way she told it, about the dog having puppies in her bed, was extra funny.

Steph didn't think she was super lucky the whole time, though. Minnie needed to stay in Steph's bed to nurse the puppies. Steph slept in a sleeping bag that first night, then on a rollaway. The girls even moved into the nursery one night when there was more yipping. D.J. got over it, but she was a bit frustrated at first; she said, "When I have kids, I'm only buying goldfish." She grew to love it, though, and would have dogs, too.

The mom and her puppies could be safely moved out in a few weeks, though, so it wasn't an inconvenience for that long. And, they had fun doing things like walking him around the yard a bunch of times to get him used to the scent of his boundaries, yanking him back if he tried to get away. They stuck together the day of the big quke, too, when Danny was late and helping people while stuck in traffic, like a lot of people did that day. Still, they had a few problems, like most kids.

Stephanie - Oct. 28, 1989 - Stephanie Finds D.J. a Boyfriend:

One thing D.J. always pointed out was that we have to help each other. So, naturally, I wanted to help her find a boyfriend. She would later hope Michelle would try to find them in similar comical ways for me – and Michelle did.[479]

We'd had a disagreement the day before, partly because D.J. was still a bit upset about the puppies in our room from last month. Dad sent us to our room to talk it over. After five minutes or so, we'd hugged and made up. I don't remember what it was about, but the important thing is, we'd made up fast because we'd been growing closer. I wanted to show bygones were bygones.[480]

Before my Halloween carnival that evening – D.J. had promised days ago to come to mine, but "not as a kid, merely as a parent-type figure"[481] - we had lunch at Anthony's Pizza.[482] One of the owner's friends, Mr. Martin, owned a pastry shop. The owner came to our table, introduced his friend, and asked if Uncle Jesse was home.

"I think so," D.J. said as she looked at him, and then gazed past him toward the kitchen. The most awesome looking boy she'd ever seen was standing in the doorway of the owner's offices – it looked like Mr. Martin's grandson.

"Good. The ad agency Mr. Martin hired cancelled on him; a fire destroyed some of their props," the owner explained. I remembered later we'd seen Mr. Martin once or twice in there. "I told him about your Uncle Jesse and Joey."

"Super," I said with my usual energy. "I was in a couple Oat Boats ads." I kept talking, until eventually Mr. Martin took us to his pastry shop to rehearse. The pizza shop owner had called our house, and Joey met us at the pastry shop. Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky were having a picnic lunch in the park.

Joey announced that he'd called their boss and requested some cameras and other equipment. He'd also written down some ideas while we ate at Anthony's.

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[479] A few books, "Full House Sister: Will You Be My Valentine,' "Matchmakers," and "How To Hide a Horse," show her helping Stephanie in comical ways with boys.

[480] While it's possible the "Divorce Court" argument doesn't happen, there are bound to be disagreements, they will simply be small and handled more easily. This is one of those.

[481] Part of the fight in that episode was over this; the more mothering D.J. would not feel ashamed to go, but would probably insist her role be defined as such, as she was in Junior High.

[482] Staple of teen life in books, they visit it in the TV Universe other times, but surely not after Steph and D.J.'s big fight in the TV Universe's "Divorce Court." Such togetherness at this time only occurs in books.

D.J., however, was a little perturbed. I didn't understand then. But, she was a little nervous around boys like Mr. Martin's grandson, Jimmy.

D.J.:

I quietly told Stephanie to let me do the talking there in the pastry shop. I didn't want her embarrassing me. I was never as frustrated being with family as I would have been, but this was one time I hoped she could remain quiet. Jimmy was so handsome. He was my age, but went to a different school.

I was too nervous, though - remember, I was in seventh grade, and hadn't had my first kiss or anything. I was anxious to know if he liked me, but I didn't want anyone asking him for me.

While making small talk, I innocently blurted that it must be great to have a grandfather who baked such wonderful chocolate treats.

"Kinda, I guess. I'm allergic to chocolate, though."

Stephanie put her hands on her hips as my face turned bright red. "And I should let you talk?" she asked incredulously.

I knew she'd said that as a friend joking around, but it was a little annoying. Joey inserted some formal introductions to lighten the mood, and Jimmy and I spoke a little.

I was still embarrassed, however, from that gaffe when I noticed a cake saying "Happy Anniversary" in a box. "I bet your grandfather's going to deliver that to a birthday party today…oops." Jimmy started laughing.

"Hey, it's no big deal, Deej," Joey assured me. "Kids don't have anniversaries, they have birthdays. And, since your mom died, you haven't seen an anniversary in your house in a few years. It was a perfectly normal mistake."

Stephanie at least had the good judgment to pull at my shirt so I'd bend down to hear her. "Are you sure that wasn't because you like him?" she whispered.

"Yes, I'm sure. And, thank you for not shouting it to the world."

"Kimmy would," Stephanie whispered.

I put my hands on my hips this time and whispered, "Do you really want to do something because Kimmy would?" She shook her head vehemently. I normally didn't want to encourage her to think ill of Kimmy, but this was one time when such a query worked perfectly – or so I thought.

Stephanie:

I'd just been kidding D.J. about Kimmy; I'd needed a reason for asking that.

Once that little scene was over, we talked a bit more and looked at the script. Soon, we were ready to practice before the crews arrived.

D.J. tried to remind herself that she was taking her Uncle Jesse's place in the ad. "Stay cool," she told herself as she lovingly placed an arm around me.

"I love my big sis; because she likes to bring me to Martin's."

"And I love my little sister," D.J. said sincerely. "She's truly got a sweet toot…Did I say 'toot!?'" she said aghast, looking away from the camera.

"That would be great if we sold beans," Jimmy joked.

"It's tooth, sweet tooth," I reminded her. "Try saying this. 'A Tudor who tooted the flute…"

"…tried to tutor two Tudors to toot," D.J. finished with me. "Okay, I've got it. I

just tried to talk too fast last time." She repeated the line correctly, then we sat in the booth as it was scripted. Joey and Mr. Martin each assured her that it was okay to flub - doing anything cold was quite difficult. It would have been much easier if it was lines we had done or at least heard once.

Just as Mr. Martin said "action," though, D.J. began hiccupping. I wearily shook my head as she drank some water. Then, she made another mistake, saying, "shuly" instead of "truly." D.J. held her head in her hands.

"It's okay, D.J.. You're just worried since you're acting, if you mess up too bad, Hollywood might blacklist you and say you can't act again."

D.J. was momentarily glad for the humorous break. "Steph, I wouldn't be blacklisted for messing up an ad."

"And of course, if you mess up too bad, they might not stop there. Maybe they'll say you can't watch a movie again." My words became muffled, then silenced, as D.J. swiped a cookie from a shelf and stuffed it into my mouth. "That would be…Mmmpf," I said before taking the cookie out and staring at it.

"What is it, Steph?" Joey asked.

"I'm not sure whether to say 'how rude' or not. I've never been interrupted by a cookie." It fit in with my lines about having had five pieces of pie that day, too.

Joey explained how he handled bloopers in his comedy acts, complete with his Popeye voice. "A couple times I messed up on stage, and I just did my Popeye voice and said something like, 'Well, blow me down, me mouth's got a loose bolt. 'Scuse me while I tightens it.'" He made the noise of an electric drill, and then said "all set," followed by his Popeye laugh.

"Okay, thanks," D.J. said with a laugh. "I guess I'll consider it tightened now…whoa!" In turning to walk back to her position, she'd failed to notice Mr. Martin walking back from the booth with the two pieces of pie. She bumped into him and sent the dishes sailing to the floor, with some of the pie winding up on Mr. Martin.

D.J. felt humiliated. She hid in the ladies' room and wouldn't come out. I finally coaxed her into the hallway behind the store part, where the bathrooms were. She still figured she'd never be in the ad, and that the boy hated her.

I told Jimmy she had stage fright - which she didn't like. Then, I came up with an ingenious way to get her into the ad without saying a line.

She gave me a big hug back there, and asked "What would I do without you?"

"You wouldn't need as many napkins," I replied. She was really confused about what I meant, but then figured I was being silly.

Joey:

D.J. walked out on cue. She got hit in the face with a huge cream pie. "I don't know if that's the best use of Martin's pies, but it's the funniest," Stephanie proclaimed.

D.J. was shocked, then instead of getting really angry, she got Stephanie in a big bear hug. She hugged her till she'd wiped most of the cream onto Stephanie, who tried unsuccessfully to squirm out of D.J.'s grip.

"Now we both need lots of napkins," Stephanie said. She needed many more than D.J.; she had to throw her blouse in the wash and wash her hair when she got home.

Mr. Martin's grandson said he liked how D.J. was such a good sport, and he even asked her out. D.J. had her first real boyfriend. It only lasted a few months between her

and Jimmy. Still, it showed just how much fun D.J. and Steph had together.

Oh, and the girls both did the commercial; I got the pie in the face. Danny and Michelle came to watch us and help Steph feel better, as there was a mild aftershock from the major quake. It didn't scare Steph like the aftershock November first, which woke her up. After that is when we had to take her to see Dr. Steiner once.[483]

Jesse – Funny Ads They Did, and Hot Pizza:

The bakery ad did well, but unfortunately, it didn't last many more years as a single unit. The owner got sick, and it was bought by a national bakery chain known as Tilly Pasteries in 1995.[484] They kept making really good food – they just had more of it once they expanded.

The ad agency we worked for hadn't done the main teen staple, Anthony's Pizza, while we worked there, but the folks at Anthony's knew us well. Joey and I got to do ads for them while we worked on our own later, though.

Joey came up with this comedy routine. People were gathered around a table, figuring out what they wanted on their pizza. Someone kept saying, "Just make sure it's hot pizza." So, the dad – played by Joey – comes home in the next part, and sure enough, the boxes say "Hot Pizza."[485] Then, the whole talk about Anthony's occurs. I thought he was nuts, but it worked. Their boxes were like that for a few years.

Joey and I did another bit that caused some to call them by two names. It involved calling Anthony Tony, which is the short version. In the ad, people mixed up the name. Joey did voices for Tony Danza, Tony the Tiger, Anthony Hopkins, even pro bowler Earl Anthony. I had to order pizza from all these characters, while the owner kept saying it was Anthony's Pizza, and he was Anthony…no, Tony. In the end, he says it doesn't matter, it's still great pizza. It worked. He went by both at times.[486]

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2. Changing Times – Mar., 1990-Aug., 1992

Danny - Mar. 11, 1990 - Feeling more comfortable:

I wasn't quite ready to become the full-time disciplinarian. But, after today, D.J. had me convinced that I could do a little of it.

I'd been telling D.J. if Michelle did something naughty for well over a year now. Her behavior problems were at low ebb. Her pediatrician had told me I shouldn't have to worry too much, but that even telling on her wasn't totally making me the boss in her eyes. In most things, it was still D.J..

However, she was so good - much better than she might have been with D.J. only reacting - that we didn't keep track of her quite as much. And so, D.J. and I were walking into the kitchen, and we caught her as she was about to try to turn on the microwave, with her Gumby action figure inside.

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[483] The Oct. 17 quake had aftershocks on those days, and it fits well with "Aftershocks"

[484] Owned by the father of Rachel Tilly, a classmate in the Michelle and Friends books who moves out to the area and from a private school into the public school.

[485] They had to label it that at the end of "Silence Is not Golden" so as not to have product names, but this is also just like one of his jokes. Normally, a box would just say "pizza," so it's fun to think they could have labeled their boxes like this. As noted elsewhere, Anthony's and Tony's are the same.

[486] This staple of books is Tony's (short for Anthony) in a few. It's the same place, given similar name. More importantly, it's a funny ad concept, just like Joey would invent in both universes.

I don't know if this would have happened without D.J. being so proactive - maybe later considering how much more we would have watched her at age three. All I knew was, we were already remodeling the kitchen after Steph wrecked Joey's car backing it into the house. We didn't need more mess.

"Dad," D.J. whispered, "this would be a good time to start punishing her."

I was floored. It felt so much like the time Pam had suggested I start putting D.J. in timeout, it was incredible. And yet, this was my baby; I didn't know if I could.

D.J. seemed to know what I was feeling. "I'll be here, Dad. Come on; instead of telling on her…"

I sighed. I knew Michelle expected to get sent to her room, the way we were looking at her - especially D.J.'s glare. I nodded toward D.J., and whispered, "Tell her what we're doing."

"Michelle, we're doing something new for a change. Daddy's going to punish you instead of just telling me when you need to be punished. I expect you to listen to him, or you will have to listen to me instead! And, we are both going to have a long talk with you about this when your timeout is over!"

I took her up to her room, and she stayed in timeout. Then, D.J. and I had a long - for a three-year-old - talk with her about why what she almost did was so dangerous.

I suspect we could have just told her "no." But, it was wrong to even put her Gumby in there.

"Remember when I said Daddy just told me to punish you because he was so sad about not having Mommy around? Well, he might still tell me sometimes," D.J. informed her at the end of our talk. "I'll still handle things just the same as I have been, and so will he. And, Dad, great work. I knew you could do it!"

"Aye aye, Captain," I said with a comical salute. She'd gotten used to me saluting like that a few times by now; it was just one of those fun family things.

Once we all left Michelle's room, I felt a little uncomfortable, though. I still hadn't liked it. I told D.J., "Maybe I'll start slow, remove dessert from her and stuff, and just send her to her room for really dangerous stuff right now."

"Still need a partner, huh?" I hated to admit it, but I did. "I'll be there for you, Dad. All the way." She made the transition go smoothly, and there were no problems.

Michelle totally understood when I let her out a few minutes later; the transition to me was going just as Dr. Landress had hoped it would.

D.J. – Michelle much better behaved; how other episodes are different:

That went more smoothly than I could have dreamed. And, then again, it didn't.

Because I'd been team captain for so long, Dad let it be a slow, gradual process. I was punishing Michelle for a few things later, though not many. It was just removing dessert for something really rude, although even that wasn't nearly as bad as it could have been. In fact, I didn't have to do that by five, or even four.

The important part is, it was for very few things. Dad took over lots of the discipline here, then most other gradually over the next half year.

Michelle never got into lots of things she could have. She had great self control. Over Christmas when she was six, she'd begun to love telling jokes. She wanted to call this "Funny Buddy" line, but knew it cost money. She asked Steph, who told me. I took

her to buy a joke book with money Granny Tanner had sent.[487] She was reading rather well by this time. She really enjoyed learning, whereas she might not have had my zest for it otherwise. Now, she wanted to be the best, too.

Also, her class was really good touring a museum. However, in another class Aaron ran in a museum and toppled a priceless dinosaur. When Jeff Farrington - from Michelle's class - heard about it the following Monday, he shouted, "Now I know what killed the dinosaurs. Aaron Bailey!"

"Not all of them," Aaron whined before going to Stephanie's office. "Just one."

He was quite timid about going in there - apparently he'd been in trouble quite recently before this. Ironically, it was one time that being in Dad's group, with that class, might have helped keep him in line.[488]

Michelle was also much better than she might have been at Disneyworld. No one's perfect, any kid that age would get a little domineering for a minute, but after I politely reminded her to be nice, she was. She never got really bossy or rude.[489]

Then, there was the time she tried to copy Dad's writing to make out an excuse note to skip school and see a celebrity. A strong lecture from me stopped that without Dad ever needing to know.[490] She never tried it again, but I had to chuckle. She took after me too much, as I'd faked being sick in fifth grade so I could see one. Good thing she didn't take after Uncle Jesse and his rebelliousness.

Becky - Apr. 14, 1990 - Change in the wedding, too; Jesse's proposal:

I was really impressed with how Jesse handled Tony when the guys watched him, and how he dealt with Michelle's slight jealousy at not being the youngest - she went to D.J. and complained, "Uncle Jesse's taking my stuff." It wasn't bad, but D.J. lacked the experience to deal with a situation like a new baby. Jesse struggled, but he was able to talk to Michelle and help her feel better very easily; with help from me.

I knew he'd make a great dad. We discussed how much fun it might be to raise a family together for a few minutes after Tony left. Then, he overwhelmed me.

He pulled out a ring, and slipped it on my finger in his attic apartment. He pledged his undying love for me, saying he wanted to do just that, raise a family. He asked me to marry him. I quickly said "yes," and we began dreaming of life together.

D.J. - Apr. 17 – Michelle gets used to Jesse maybe leaving:

I would have let the guys handle this if Michelle was more attached to Uncle Jesse. As it was, Michelle and I were cuddling on the couch, since she didn't want to take a real nap, and I could use a little rest. It was one of those times that I never would have taken advantage of otherwise, but that now seemed so sweet. I was growing to love such tender moments. I knew she'd be growing up too fast.

I praised her for helping with Tony, once Uncle Jesse and Becky had helped with the situation. Then, I casually said, "You know, Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky are going to

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[487] Consensus is that she would never make the "Funny Buddy" calls from "Silence Is Not Golden"

[488] "Please Don't Touch the Dinosaur" - Aaron was good when normally he was so wild Danny noted in a later episode they were watching him for a few days till "the regular sitter stops twitching." So, Aaron is the likely culprit in the Book Universe tour.

[489] Though she likely wouldn't cut in line, one book mentions her being Princess for a Day, so Stephanie let her go first, since she, too, is nicer.

[490] Book "My Secret, Secret Admirer" - she's just like D.J.. except she didn't actually do it

start a new life together and have little kids themselves."

"Will they be here like Tony was?"

"Well, they won't live here, but they'll be over all the time, I'm sure. Becky wasn't certain at first, but in the last half year, she's come to realize she wants to make this area her home. And, you'll get something cool that I never got, then. You'll have cousins who don't live thousands of miles away!"

"Thousands?!" She appeared to count in her head. "That's further than the ice cream place."

"It sure is!" I built up the joy of cousins so much, I think the idea of Uncle Jesse moving out slipped past her for the moment.

A few days later, she asked about it again.

"It doesn't mean we won't be a family anymore," I explained. "But, you know, Daddy's mom doesn't live with us, either, and you really love her, right?"

"Of course. She brings me presents." I asked her to name something else they did together, so she didn't think of a person solely as a present machine. "We like to bake cookies," she said. She named others, too. It was one of those little things, I'd learned, that helped kids realize that several things can be in the same category at once, and thus they can think about more things at once.

"Well, when Uncle Jesse gets married, you'll have a new Aunt Becky. They'll be part of our family like Granny Tanny," I told her, using the cute name she had for her.

Michelle began to understand. Over time, it was easy for her to grasp that Uncle Jesse was moving out but still loved us, and she got used to it.

Danny – May 17 – Stephanie Works More with Michelle:

Another great time to discuss things with kids is bath time. "Steph," I said this evening, "You've handled putting Michelle to bed a few times. You've been in with D.J. when she's done this and done a great job. Would you like to handle it yourself once? Your sister's got a big test, and your Uncle Jesse and Joey and D.J. and I all think you're old enough. I'll be working on my show, but I'll be right in my office. Don't let Michelle stand up or try to get out herself, of course, and call us when she's done."[491] I named a few more rules, and finally asked, "Are there any questions?"

"Well, you didn't stop long enough for me to answer, but sure, I'll do it."

"Thanks." Stephanie was a wonderful helper and friend for Michelle. This part might not have happened otherwise, though putting her to bed would have.[492] However, D.J. had been working, bit by bit, to mold Stephanie into the kind, considerate person she'd been toward them. It was working.

Jesse – Michelle gradually telling time, really learns around five:

Another thing they did was teach her to think of others. They always told her what time it was, and said when she could come in and get them up, whereas I'd get up when she did if I had the chance. She kind of knew some times very early.

That was more gradual, of course, but she was interested in learning in general, way more than I had been. She really took after D.J. in that. We all helped, and she got the hang of it after a few weeks in Kindergarten.

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[491] "My Two Best Friends," Michelle gives Nicky and Alex baths at eight, likely with similar instructions

[492] "Misadventures in Babysitting," among others

Stephanie – Sat. June 16 – A mini-wedding:

Since Papouli and the others couldn't come for the wedding itself, we had a celebration while they were here. Uncle Jesse brought samples of wedding cake later Friday, after everyone had unpacked. Michelle and Melina playfully touched one of the pieces, but didn't actually get into the samples. Dad had them sit still and settle for a minute or so, and that was enough.[493]

We would up sharing the samples with this lady named Elena, too. Apparently, Uncle Jesse had known her in Greece, and through some weird custom, they were a couple. He kissed her once, to make sure he'd have no feelings for any other girl, and he didn't. Then, they walked around a table backwards, and he and Becky walked around it forwards today. If we'd all been living in 2000 B.C., and they'd exchanged farm animals, we wouldn't have had to worry about planning a huge wedding.

They also set a date for their real wedding, September 22nd. Papouli suggested they should get married here in San Francisco, so they did.

Joey – Fri., Aug. 17, 1990 – Danny's Great "Report Card":

Danny took Michelle to her four-year-old checkup today. We didn't like to think about what might have been if D.J. wasn't proactive.

Of course, with her on that floor, it would have happened anyway, we said. Not only that, but she would have reacted even with Jesse there. However, Danny learned a reacting D.J. would have helped, but it was her hard work, and Danny taking that minister's advice, that really helped.

Danny updated Dr. Landress on what they'd done as far as discipline. He praised her big time for how good she was, and as the doctor talked to her, he agreed. However, he said something even more significant.

"Mr. Tanner, I am impressed. When you told me you instructed D.J. to put her in timeout, I wondered how well that would work. However, she seems to understand you were the one in charge, even when you weren't disciplining her yourself. D.J. is a boss to her, but you two were equal in her mind, and now, you have become pretty much the ultimate authority to her, although of course, D.J. is still a major one to her."

"Really? I mean, of course." He laughed nervously. "It's been rough, Doc. I won't deny it." He talked about how he still missed Pam sometimes.

"D.J. says she helps 'cause Daddy's sad," Michelle chimed in.

"You're right," the doctor concurred. "That's exactly why your Daddy's asked D.J. to help make sure you follow the rules at times."

"She was in church, and she heard this man talk about a boy who gave his lunch to Jesus. And He made a whole bunch of lunches," Michelle said, making a huge circle with her hands. "And D.J. asked God to help her take her love and make a whole lot more love," she finished. Danny began to get a little choked up. Michelle had heard that story many times from D.J., and from us.

Dr. Landress agreed. "It sounds like that's just what D.J.'s done."

"Yeah. Well…I guess everything's going well, huh?" Danny asked.

"Obviously, Mr. Tanner, you still need to handle everything consistently as normal parents do. But, it sounds like with D.J. being proactive, you supporting her as

[493] "Greek Week," with Michelle much better than with the samples in "Shape Up'

‘team captain,’ and agreeing when she pushed you to talk to the minister a dozen times or so about coping with your grief, you have cleared all the important hurdles.”

“Thanks, Dr. Landress. You know, I even let D.J. allow my little princess not to wear matching socks to preschool. Well, okay, one matched her shirt and the other matched her pants. She got laughed at, but it didn’t damage her like I was afraid, just like my sending her to her room didn’t. I still clean a lot at times, but, I’m a lot more relaxed than I could be.” He patted him on the shoulder. “Thanks for all your help.”

D.J. – Sept. 15 – Jesse’s “Reunion”:

We were all really proud of how well Michelle behaved. As Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky went to the reunion, thanks to one of his friends being on the reunion committee and letting him bring a guest, Dad took Kimmy and I to observe the news. Joey helped clean up after Comet’s birthday party. Michelle wanted a dog her size, but that problem was solved quickly. I was so glad I could help with things like that.

Uncle Jesse had been afraid Becky would ask embarrassing questions and find out he didn’t graduate, but being a week away, he realized they were a couple. Unfortunately, this meant he deftly avoided any talk of what should have been his last few months of school. He introduced his ex-girlfriend Carrie as his “prom date,” and while Carrie was disappointed that he was now taken, he used it to increase the smokescreen he threw up about having had a normal senior year.

Stephanie – Sept. 20 – Michelle’s Midnight Treats:

“Daddy, can I please have some ice cream?”

I can’t imagine you’d have ever heard this if Uncle Jesse was Michelle’s role model. But, Michelle had really matured. So much so that Dad gave her a special treat if she woke up in the middle of the night and couldn’t go back to sleep.

There were rules, of course. She had to have been really good that day. It could only happen once in a while, till she got older, so she didn’t do it too much.

Still, she had a good amount of self control for a girl who had just turned four. Oh, she had the youthful exuberance you’d expect about lots of things, but that was all. And, this time alone meant Dad and Michelle could bond even more.

Tonight, Michelle was excited about the wedding, and also thinking about Uncle Jesse moving out. “Who will sleep up there?”

“Well, pumpkin, for right now, it’ll be a guest bedroom. It also has some of your Uncle Jesse’s recording stuff in it, of course.”

“Can I sleep up there?”

“Well, honey, you’re not a guest.” Dad and Michelle looked fondly at each other as he handed her a small bowl of vanilla ice cream, and sat down with his own. “Remember when Papouli came? The room would be for if someone like that comes. Or, maybe for D.J. to have a slumber party in; she always respected his stuff before, and I think even Kimmy understands to use the blank tapes in my office instead of his.” He chuckled. “I’m not talking you to sleep, am I?”

“Not yet,” she said. They talked about what other types of rooms there were in houses. Michelle thought it was “really silly” that some homes had outhouses.

“You know, I’ve been so proud of you. You don’t cause any problems, you’re polite, you obey the rules. When I tell you to do something, you usually do it. Well, as

well as you can expect a four-year-old to do it. And, even then, you're probably a little more mature than a number of kids your age…"

"Daddy, I'm getting sleepy," Michelle told him. She'd finished her scoop of ice cream and stretched one arm out, with her head on that arm.

"Okay. Let's get you off to dreamland." They took their dishes to the sink.

Dad carried her upstairs and tucked Michelle into bed. He looked around at the border – which still had bunnies. "You've got lots of different animals, that's for sure. Joey says he might have gotten you a pig for your third birthday, but he was on a bear kick that day when he got one present.[494] I'd say the bears are winning over the bunnies here," he teased. "Well, your sisters have talked about changing rooms next year, once D.J. gets into high school and needs her own. So, if you don't mind, we'll just keep them up till then. Besides, Peaches still likes them." Peaches was a big panda, one of her favorites. "Who knows, maybe a pig would have become your favorite if he had. You've got a great family, and so many cute and cuddly animals. I'm glad we can give you such warm, happy memories…"

She was snoring. Dad snickered and kissed her good night. "Sweet dreams."

Jesse - Sept. 22, 1990 - Book anniversary and band tours:

This was the day we waited for since spring, when I proposed to Becky. I got the band and I a bunch of gigs over the summer, planned around Papouli's anniversary. We played fairs in the Western U.S. for two months, as part of a small tour that we hoped would lead to bigger things next year.

Becky came along on our tour for a while, taking a vacation and then taking advantage of the show airing reruns in August for a while. We planned everything about the wedding, and I'd phone Danny and give him the details.

The wonderful thing was, since Danny started punishing Michelle, her behavior never hit any rough spots. Oh, there was the brief time right before she turned four that she tested a few limits, but even that wasn't huge. D.J. and Danny consistently showed a united front. There was the time we were all busy in January and Joey had to take Michelle when he helped chaperone Steph's class trip to a chocolate factory. But, what little kid wouldn't get a tummy ache there from all the free samples? Some of Steph's own classmates ate too much chocolate there. The important thing was, she was remorseful even without that big tummy ache.

Everything looked great for our move out - Joey and I could continue working where we always had, but I could easily move in with Becky. I'd have to help with the rent, but that didn't seem to be a problem with both our incomes.

However, that would soon change.

Becky - Mon. Oct. 8 - Why Jesse's still in the attic in books:

One thing about Jesse, when he's committed to something, he's very steadfast. He'd proven it before with other ladies. Now, after we came back from our honeymoon, their employer wanted him to do a really steamy ad, wrapped in a towel.[495]

He wouldn't do it. The female client was treating him like she had the hots for him. The employer put more pressure on him - the client had waited till the wedding and

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[494] She doesn't have her pig in books because a different birthday means some different gifts.

[495] "The I.Q. Man" will still happen, though delayed a bit perhaps

then till we came back from our honeymoon, because she knew Jesse was very busy with other commitments. The boss had given him a month off, there there were other commitments backed up till now. In the end, he and Joey quit.

Danny:

Joey came home and told me what had happened. I was stunned. "Don't worry, Danny," he finished, "I'll try to find work somehow."

"Oh, it's okay, Joey, we can make do. I mean, I make enough, and if you do more comedy shows, I'm here in the evenings. Our budget's better than Jesse and Becky's with their rent; our house is paid for." And, even there, she'd been able to pay her rent and save some money. Of course," I finished dejectedly, "they'd been hoping to use Jesse's income to save up to buy a home. And, now, that can't happen."

"I know, and Jesse had almost nothing left in savings after the engagement and weddings rings, then the honeymoon."[496]

I wasn't fazed. "Well, they always have a place," I told Joey. "Remember when I loaned you that $800, Joey, what happened after that?"

"D.J. went potty all over me like Old Faithful?'"

"I mean later," I chided him. "It's easier on Michelle than it would have been. We don't need him to move back - but it's a good idea, isn't it?" Joey agreed. "Why don't I call them?" I did, and Jesse reported that they were trying to figure out how their budget would work. "How would you like a place rent free?"

"What? You really mean it? Hey, Beck, pick up the other phone!" he shouted excitedly. She did. "You'd really let us move back? I mean, we can make it…"

"Jess, listen, you move back in, you won't have any rent. You can save up for your home much more easily, and still live here and help us."

They moved back. Everything was working out wonderfully. Becky would learn in early March she was pregnant, so Jesse got the band four weeks of bookings in June and very early July, ending with the July fourth weekend. After that, he'd be back in time for Nicky and Alex to be born August 12th, a month or so early.

The most wonderful thing, though, happened next May.

Kimmy – Oct. 28 – Crank Calls, Not Hitchhiking:

I wanted to hitchhike to Berkeley and back for Halloween; D.J. told me that was really dangerous, and she wouldn't do it. She'd put a lot of work into being like a mother, and I guess she thought about others a bit more than most teens. Anyway, she convinced me something else would be much more fun, anyway.

We stayed up making crank calls last night, till maybe two in the morning. She did the normal stuff, with some comical ones thrown in; mine were just weird.

It was dumb, but it wasn't dangerous. The problem came when I kept doing it the next night - till I accidentally dialed the Tanner house by mistake. D.J.'s dad was upset and started rambling for about five minutes, till I had to hang up on him. Then, he called my parents, and that put a stop to it.

D.J. – Tues., Nov. 6 – Covering an Election, Redistricting Plans:

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[496] These are spaced more on TV, and the honeymoon is after Jesse and Joey have made money with their own agency. Here, Jesse and Becky aren't in position to elope, so he still had to buy the wedding ring.

This was a great time to be newspaper editor. I would have assigned myself to write an editorial the previous week no matter what, but there was an important school issue that made it even more important. So, I told several people to cover it.

There were two redistricting plans. Each had sixth graders in Middle Schools starting next year. Starting with current sixth graders, students would be in Middle Schools through ninth. But, here was the difference.

The one which wound up failing was one which would have produced a new middle school – DiMaggio. John Muir and Van Atta, where I was, would have been torn down. There were other changes, too.

In the one which passed, however, John Muir merged with Van Atta Junior High in the present Van Atta building, to be renovated over the next couple years. The new school would be John Muir Middle School, with the old John Muir razed. There would still be some new structures.

In short, the difference was basically between building or just renovating one.

I supported the latter plan. All trophies, the mascot, and everything else from John Muir could be transferred to the renovated building, including structural features.

It was a close vote. I don't know if my not being so stressed over Michelle's behavior had anything to do with it; I did help more than I might have. I'm not the only one who played a role, though. Steph's friend Allie's dad had worked with the John Muir campaign, too, since he'd gone to the old John Muir.

Oh, you might be wondering what Kimmy covered. I asked Kimmy to write on the traditions of Van Atta Junior High that should be kept. She heard one about Uncle Jesse, when he went to this school. He'd heard Richard Nixon visited in 1962, while running for governor, and went to the bathroom. So, in eighth grade at Van Atta, Uncle Jesse spray painted the words "Still a crook" in the stall Nixon supposedly used. He figured if Nixon came back, he might use the same stall.

She wrote about it – strange things were her style. Of course, they'd covered it up long ago, but they redid the restrooms during the renovation, to be on the safe side.

Stephanie – Wed., Nov. 14 – What Becky Living There Earlier Changes:

"Danny," Becky whispered gently in the nursery as she shook him. "Do you want to wake up, or do I have to have Michelle tickle you awake?"

"Shhh, Daddy's sleeping," Michelle told her.

"Huh? What?" He looked at his watch. "Oh my, I would have slept right through D.J.'s play and the judging for Steph's science fair. Where's my car keys? Where's Michelle?" He looked at her. "Oh, there you are."

Poor Dad. He'd been so confused, he'd mixed our schedules up when he told us what he'd do, but thanks to Aunt Becky, he got there in time to see D.J. as Juliet, and to see me win at the science fair.[497] Aunt Becky came with us, and she had to keep him from dozing off, but she drove, so that was okay. He sure slept well that night.

With Aunt Becky working, there weren't many other things that would have been different if Uncle Jesse married her a half year later or so. Of course, D.J. was anxious to take me to my Honeybee party anyway earlier this fall, just before the wedding. And, she'd have been around a lot anyway, by then.

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[497] "Danny In Charge"

Becky – Jan. 11, 1991 – D.J.'s Relationship with Danny, and "My Girl":

D.J. would have gotten close even if she'd just reacted to Danny's problems, but it would have made her more emotional herself. Instead of just having pity on him, though, she was a team member. She could tell easily when he was trying too hard – which was fairly often, at times.

She walked into the house and saw him with a wild outfit singing and, well, looking like he was having a seizure as he tried to dance.[498] "Dad," she insisted, "didn't you always say don't be something you're not?"

"Yes…yes, I did. Deej, I just wanted to surprise you at your school fundraiser tonight by coming up on stage and singing."

"Well…Dad, nobody's going to believe that's the real you. Sing Barry Manilow." She saw Jesse pretend to have chest pain. "Or, sing Billy Joel, or something like that. But, look at yourself. That outfit isn't you. It's not even Kimmy!"

"She's right, Mr. T.," Kimmy agreed. "D.J. told me never to wear leather. It'll make me attractive to the wrong people. Like you right now."

Danny sighed. "I'm sorry, Deej…it's just that 'My Generation' deals with real angst and pain…like my shoulder. What do you want me to sing?"

"I've got an idea," I said as I finally stopped giggling at the sight of Danny singing and gyrating. "Didn't you say there was a song you used to sing all the time to D.J. when she was a little girl?"

"Oh yeah; I forgot about that," Danny said.

"You mean 'My Girl'? Dad, that would be perfect. It's your style, it's got a lot of love surrounding it. It's what we'd expect from a dad. Just don't talk about my 'cute little tushie' up there tonight." He agreed, and they laughed together.

Joey – Feb. 9 - Danny Buys One More Fish, Where It Went:

Danny had gotten through his grieving well, compared to what might have been. I think it was from not wanting D.J. to do too much after she dedicated herself.

Still, Michelle killed her fish in a bubble bath by accident, and he bought another fish for her, so Michelle didn't feel so bad about what she'd done to it. He also bought an aquarium. D.J. and Steph weren't overly shocked; one fish wasn't too bad. It wasn't pregnant, so there were no more.[499]

She eventually got used to her new one, and kept him for a while. However, a couple factors led to her not keeping him for as long. Michelle wasn't in her room as much when we moved it there. Plus, it was just one; it might have been more interesting if it had been pregnant and we had lots of babies to watch.

The fish lasted through the summer. Then, when we went on vacation, it died. We were too busy to think about getting another one, with the babies being born. We kept the tank, which Michelle eventually used when she rented a turtle for a race.[500]

D.J. - Mother's Day, 1991 - A Day to Remember:

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[498] "Ol' Brown Eyes"

[499] "A Fish Called Martin" – he could pick a female, but chances are low that he'd pick a pregnant one, yet it's easy to see him still get one

[500] "The Fastest Turtle In The West," almost surely the same aquarium as in "A Fish Called Martin." Yes, it could be Bubba's, the turtle in "The Return of Grandma," which is also canon here, but Danny is more likely to have bought a new one, and this is a very likely alternate end for the family fish.

Michelle didn't always come in to snuggle with me now, though sometimes she cuddled with Steph in the morning. We were on our way to passing the torch. As a family we'd emphasized that Michelle got to be a big girl before Kindergarten, and room with Stephanie being the big sister, letting me have my own room and some freedom.

Okay, I wouldn't have total freedom for a few years, but I was getting there, bit by bit. I'd rebelled a touch this past year, worrying about my weight, sneaking out once to see a boy instead of doing my homework, but nothing major.

Once everything was arranged, Dad pulled out the video camera and…well, Joey started taping for him, as Dad started to get kind of teary. He couldn't believe they were doing this, and yet, in a way, he could.

Stephanie:

I woke up and read; I wanted to make sure D.J. stayed in bed. Michelle and I had a special surprise for her. She'd made it in preschool. I helped her write a poem.

Aunt Becky helped us carry a tray up to D.J., complete with pancakes. I carried some juice, while Michelle carried her card. Dad started talking about the slumber party D.J. took me too, the way she always encouraged us so much, the way she was always helping Michelle with things. He started with her staying home to watch Michelle when the rest of us had chicken pox and went from there.

D.J. – Beautiful card:

I didn't know what this was - it sounded like that old show "This Is Your Life" at first. It was touching - but nothing like what I felt when I opened that card.

The last four lines made me cry for days. "I never knew my Mommy, but I know it's true. I'm sure that my Mommy was just like you." I sat hugging my sisters and crying like a baby. How could I ever measure up to the wonderful way our mom handled things? I didn't think I was worthy to be compared with her.

Sure, I'd tried. I'd helped her learn to be polite and obedient and respectful - she almost always said "please" and "thank you" now, though like most kids she slipped up when too excited. I'd become the one she turned to with questions. I was the one, just as much as Dad, to chase away nightmare monsters and everything.

Uncle Jesse and Joey helped a lot. Still, when she threw her arms around me and said, "I love you," there was something special, something that only comes from being a mother. I got the impression I was filling that role. And yet, there was still that sense of not being nearly as good as her, wondering if Mom would be proud of me.

I didn't have to wonder after today. I was truly my sisters' mom. It was the most rewarding thing I could imagine, this side of Heaven. My efforts had been worth it. I framed that card, and have always cherished it. We sometimes did fun stuff for Aunt Becky or – when she was here – Granny Tanner. But nothing can compare to this.

Danny - June 26, 1991 – Michelle Pretty Good Even At Worst:

Michelle had begun to cop that "big kid who can do anything" attitude some children get around age five. Today, D.J. finally had enough – she'd sat her in the corner instead of just in her room a few days ago. Today, after much arguing, she yelled at her to go to her room till she came to get her, not the usual ten minutes. D.J. waited twenty or so, till both calmed down. I was busy sweeping the gutters because, frankly, I had always

been a bit lax on enforcing politeness and I just didn't want this hassle. It was a battle with the "team captain," anyway.

D.J. was confident there would be no further problems, and there weren't. When she went up to Michelle's room, she found her downcast and looking at old pictures. "Remember the fun we used to have?" Michelle mourned.

D.J. sat next to her. "When you were my sweet, little Strawberry Shortcake and behaved so well?" Michelle nodded and sniffled as D.J. cradled her in her lap. Being yelled at like that by her "mother figure" really had an effect on her, and made her behave real well; she hated being yelled at, and was much more sensitive with D.J. having "raised her" some. "It's time to start being that again, isn't it? Although, now you can be my sweet, big Strawberry Shortcake," she hastened to add.

"That would make me very happy."

They talked about her behavior, and what had to improve, and that was it. This ended what may have been her largest stage of defiance, though one could argue the Terrible Twos were a bit worse. Stephanie handled some things as D.J.'s assistant when I wasn't around now, but D.J. handled big things like this. Michele might have battled D.J. a little more at times, whereas if D.J. only reacted when things got bad, it would have been much tougher over the long haul.

As Michelle went into Kindergarten, though, what mattered was that we had a very good, polite, obedient girl on our hands.

Jesse - Aug. 14, 1991 - Election aftermath - Allie Stays:

Nicky and Alex came home today. They were born August 12th, Michelle's fifth birthday.[501] Joey hosted a great party while Danny went to help me and Becky. I thought I was the happiest person alive, next to Becky. The look on Steph's face told us she was almost as happy, though.

As you know, John Muir merged with Van Atta and was called John Muir Middle School, with the old John Muir razed. That was part of the plan that passed.[502]

Now, this is why Stephanie was so chipper. Her friend Allie's dad worked with the John Muir campaign, since he'd gone to the old John Muir. It's hard to know how a few hundred votes can be swayed, but the important part is, the victory allowed him to be put in touch with people who'd be working on renovating the building. Today, one of those contractors offered him a job that wouldn't have come otherwise. By the end of the year, he'd have full time work, with as much of a guarantee of income as he could have had. Allie would be staying, since her dad had steady employment, though after a while he got a job selling computer software when that became more common.

Stephanie:

Allie and I had long worried about her moving. Practically since her dad was first laid off. He'd been called back twice, but he wasn't about to let this chance go by. If this job hadn't come, he would have stayed till the plant closed in 1992, then they'd have moved. Now, he'd leave the plant early for this other job, and Allie could stay.

We were so excited, we could hardly stand it. This was something I'd prayed for,

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[501] Books have them exactly five years apart

[502] Books differ a little as to the school's age, but this helps, because it can be old or new, depending on how you look at it; the renovated building, the structure, etc.. It's implied D.J. went there

too - I didn't pray often, but thanks to D.J.'s faithfulness to her task, I prayed more than I might have normally. Still not as much as I should, but not many people do.

D.J.:

Stephanie normally had all of Mom's excitement. A couple months after Michelle had moved in with her, she was on top of the world. Michelle sent her kids to help after her first day of Kindergarten, but while she had the normal playground disputes, Michelle never got in trouble. She knew Stephanie equaled me in terms of discipline.

I was so thankful I'd been proactive. I'd never even considered the threat of even light fwaps since Michelle was so compliant. Steph faced a few kids kind of like Uncle Jesse this year, but nobody really like him. Would that ever change next year, though!

Danny – Aug. 17 – The Girls Switch Rooms:

Today, I did one of those corny things showing how I loved to celebrate life.

We'd prepared Michelle for the move for months. Once she turned five, she would get to sleep in the "big girls'" room – because that's where the older girls had been for so long. Steph was promoted, and D.J. got her own room.

They'd talked about doing it before, but each of us, at one time, put off thinking about it. The earthquake, for instance, kept us from it a few months later, so Steph would feel better. Finally, this spring, we agreed to do it here.

Since Michelle was anxious about going to Kindergarten, it would be great for her to room with Steph. Stephanie had been excited to be the oldest in her room for a long while. And, of course, D.J. would be right across the hall.

Michelle really felt great about being in the "big girl" room, This was the perfect prelude to her going to Kindergarten. Steph wasn't sure if she wanted her to keep the bear above her bed. She let her, though.

One of the most important things in anything is planning. A lot of things we would have had trouble with because of the suddenness of them were being done with much more ease. The loss of Pam was a change that was way too sudden for any of us. I think it helped that we talked things out like this. And, that I had my really comical ceremonies to mark the occasion.

Michelle – On the Pink Bunnies:

I hadn't liked the pink bunnies as much, and had bears around, too. I had lots of stuffed animals, period. So, I wasn't disappointed when I moved, and the bunnies were taken down. Dad kept a few, of course, but that was just his having a hard time with change. That had been the nursery since Steph was born. It meant there were no more babies, except for Nicky and Alex. And, he knew they wouldn't like pink bunnies.

Jesse – Michelle helping in school, still the right kind of popular:

Like most teachers, Michelle's preschool teacher tried to get the kids to help, but mostly let them play. However, she was encouraged by her desire to keep being like her sisters. That's one reason why she loved helping Mrs. Yoshida so much by the time fourth grade came, even before she became class president.[503]

She was nice about it all the time, though, like D.J. and Steph were. Like Pam,

[503] A common element in numerous Michelle and "Michelle and Friends" books

too; some kids are really smart but likable, too, because they're willing to help others. I mean, even when Steph was PA, she was kind of snubbed by so-called 'popular kids," but that's because they said they were popular and tried to rule the school their own way. Michelle was as humble as a kid her age would be, though also quite blunt.

It was cute to hear a few months later about how Michelle went into class one day and said, "Guess what I learned to do." She loved learning

Joey - Aug. 26, 1991 - Michelle's First Day of Kindergarten in Books:

Michelle had the typical jitters, wondering if kids would like her, since her other preschool classmates would be in the half-day Kindergarten. There was a boy named Jeff in her Kindergarten class who I'd have thought would fit in with my advice - holding her hands over her head like antlers and talking like Bullwinkle. In a way, he did, I guess, and she didn't follow through. But, that figured; she'd just turned five.

Here's what happened - Jeff Farrington was sitting at a table wearing a cute t-shirt with two hands with fingers pointing in opposite directions. The shirt said "He went that way." Michelle walked up to him, talked like Bullwinkle, and introduced herself. Jeff copied what Michelle did while introducing himself, and walked away.[504]

At least nobody had called her "strange."[505] Jeff did what came naturally, what he thought was appropriate in a new setting for him, or probably both.

If I'd been there, I would have bolstered her confidence by saying, "See, you made a friend." I wasn't though - we were more confident than we had been when Steph started. Admittedly, part of it with Steph was that Pam's death had been so recent; that's why we hung out there then.

Stephanie:

Michelle came up to me, and insisted on staying with me. I told her, "That boy wasn't laughing at you, he just wanted to play along with you."

"I wasn't trying to play. I was trying to make friends."

That was a good point. As I walked her back, I explained that he probably didn't realize what she was doing. As we got to know Jeff, I sensed he might have even figured it was normal to talk with hands on one's head.

At least I didn't have to counter a kid calling her strange; when we got to her classroom, I introduced her, and told the class what a cool kid she was. The class all said "hello" to her like she had. I also asked if there were any other kids looking for friends. That's how she met Cassie Wilkins.[506]

D.J.:

I didn't have the feeling a mother does sending her little one off to Kindergarten. It was more a sense of freedom for me; or, rather, of my work changing. Still, I enjoyed helping Michelle and encouraging her.

A lot of milestones had already been reached, though. She'd gradually learned to

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[504] A class clown would take a very different approach. Your narrator has it on good advice from a kid who is one that this is very accurate for a kid like that.

[505] As Teddy does in the TV version of "Double Trouble." His dad's job probably never brings him to San Francisco in books, but even if it had, Michelle was in a different class from him.

[506] They met her first day of Kindergarten; Cassie's a bit shier, so this is quite logical.

tell time at three and four by looking at the clock and being told when she could get up and come over into our room. Steph continued that by having a limit on when they could lay awake and talk; well, Dad did, too, but he still didn't enforce everything, and he figured that was a good way for them to bond.

Michelle was super excited. A few days later, she announced she'd become one of the students who helps the teacher to "watch the clock" near lunch and other times. It was to help all the kids learn to tell time, but also to encourage helpfulness.

Danny – Oct. 5 – Bonding, Winning a Reunion Contest With Michelle:

I loved doing special things with each of my girls. Michelle and I won a balloon race in our family reunion today. Steph and D.J. won the three-legged race. Joey lost the pie-eating contest. We didn't get to any after this for a long while. We were too busy, they weren't timed right, or they were too far away.

Jesse and Becky hadn't been able to enter; they were so busy with the twins. But, that was best. Jesse was stressing over not being able to write music, anyway. He put way too much pressure on himself to support a family at times. We'd planned for them not to be there. Michelle wouldn't miss him – she was focused on wining with me.[507]

Becky packed the twins up and came anyway when Jesse was making her too miserable with his attitude. He came along later to root for us, too.

Michelle – Oct. 11 – Stephanie in ballet at school:

D.J. and Stephanie were so graceful. They'd helped me with so much, I always wanted to be like them. But, in some things I couldn't be, like ballet. Steph was really super; we had so much fun watching her at school today. That would be true in any universe, though she wound up not doing it in Middle School because she was so busy with everything else; she probably would have otherwise.

She loved taking after D.J. here and with the bake-off a few weeks later. I thought she could be a professional, though I didn't know how hard that was, at my age. Still, it's one more thing that had me sending lots of kids to her with problems.

Stephanie – Oct. 16 - Michelle Loves Learning, Starting to Read:

"Guess what we learned today?"

That was something Michelle said a few times on the way home; especially if I asked, since she wasn't as verbal as I had been; of course, not many are.

It could be about lots of things. The second half of the day was less structured, but there was still plenty of time to learn fun stuff. They kept the kids busy enough they didn't have a regular nap time, though there was a place kids could take one if they really had to. Michelle did sometimes yet, but not often.

She was just like a lot of kids, though, in what she asked next.

"Can you teach me to read? I wanna read like D.J.."

I had to laugh. "Sure, Michelle. We can start on that this evening."

"Good. D.J. reads lots of stuff without pictures," Michelle said in an amazed voice, having faith I could help, just like other kids she sent to me.

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[507] "The King and I" – With the twins born earlier in books, they'd be too busy, and Danny would be closer to Michelle, anyway. So, Jesse doesn't originally plan to race with her, and doesn't yell and break his promise, but he would get that way with Becky for a bit; her coming anyway like that is just like her.

Our Uncle Jesse wasn't a reader, so she wouldn't have picked that up from him. However, she knew a few kids in her class read, and with D.J.'s influence, she wanted to be just like them. And, part of that, too, was that she wanted to be the best, though she didn't have that quite like D.J., it was a part of her, too.

If only she could have inspired Kimmy like that. With Kimmy, it was enough o keep her in the same grade.

Kimmy – Kimmy's reading, why Kimmy's not in special education:

I had learning problems which nobody knew about till I got out of high school. But, most of my problems came from not wanting to think. I was reading, slowly, in first grade. But, it was hard, so I didn't put much effort into it. My parents never encouraged me to have an interest in learning, and I needed that.

D.J. tried to push me to like learning. I never saw a need for it, till we were split up in fifth grade. The kids in her class didn't have homework per se that first day. But, to D.J. it was; they were all ready to talk about what they did over the summer.[508] D.J. did, but not formally. I just wanted to get to the mall.

D.J. convinced me to let her help, so we could be in sixth together. They had three classes of each in that school, and tried to see if it would help to separate them, but in sixth, the top groups were together again. The bottom class became a sort of special ed class, in preparation for Junior High and high school.[509]

D.J. helped with that and a lot more. For instance, they started to work with Michelle on reading. Their dad said, "Let's start at the very beginning," and D.J. quipped "a very good place to start," from that song in "The Sound of Music."

Then, I tried to sing, "When you sing you begin with ABC, when you read you begin with do re mi." I thought for a second, as D.J. tried to figure out how to let me down gently. "Is that how it goes?" I pondered aloud. Then, a second later, I said, "Of course. Because the musical notes go A through G."

Stephanie joked, "Now we know where her problems started."

I knew better if I thought about it. But, I chose not to. That's why they'd put me in the slower class; they'd tried lots of things to help me. None of them worked.
By sixth grade, I'd learned to apply myself just enough, so I never ended up with kids with real problems. For instance, we joked about me copying D.J.'s work. But, in reality, I knew how to make it just different enough nobody would think I was copying. Although, to be funny, I would write her name.[510]

Danny – Nov. 9 – Father-Daughter Bake-off, "Right Side Up Cake":

The fourth graders had a tradition; for their harvest festival, they have a special father-daughter bake-off. I'd tried to teach D.J. to make a soufflé inside a boot when she was in fourth, but Pam insisted we try a pie. As it turned out, D.J. did most of the work, she was a really good cook. We took home top honors.

Now, it was Steph's turn. I realized it was important to just teach her the family

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[508] "The First Day of School"

[509] D.J. likely had some advanced placement courses, but they seem to be together in sixth, and clearly are in parts of Junior High and high school, though they don't have all subjects together.

[510] Little jokes like this would happen, but this is another example where your pen pal tells a joke, and the realistic way is just a bit different.

recipe D.J. and I had used. “Better than the stress of dance class, huh?” I asked.[511]

“Yeah. At least I don’t have to lose by making an anchovy pizza,” she quipped.

“Well, some people might like anchovies, but probably not your classmates.” We proudly stood with our creation and talked with some of the others about the special bond we had. It was great to see so many dads having fun, with some grandfathers and uncles scattered in. Although, some seemed to have let the girls do all the work out of necessity, not just because their daughters were good at it.

“Daddy and Stephanie will know,” we heard Michelle say. “Daddy?” she said, as she walked up to us. Stephanie’s classmate Anna was walking behind her.

“Yes, pumpkin?”

“Anna’s daddy forgot to turn his upside-down cake. Is it a right side up cake?”

“Well…I suppose.” I hadn’t really thought about it.

“Then where should he put the icing?”

I wasn’t sure, but Steph never failed to have an idea. “Well, Michelle, that’s easy. You put it on the top. Except the top is supposed to be the bottom, so if the bottom is the top, you put it on the bottom because it’s on top.”

“Actually, pineapple upside-down cake doesn’t need icing. Is he putting some on?” I asked. Michelle nodded with great certainty. “Maybe he could make another layer, then, so the top doesn’t have icing. Er, that is, the bottom.”

“Except the bottom’s on the bottom,” Steph noted, “and her dad’s icing the top, which was supposed to be the bottom. So, I don’t know if he should put the bottom of the second layer on the bottom. See, if he puts the top on the bottom, he won’t have to flip the upside-down cake because the new bottom will be on top, so it’ll have two bottoms.”

Michelle looked Anna in the eye and said sincerely, “Just make chocolate cake. It’ll be much easier for everyone.” D.J. got Michelle and led her back to the spectator area, and Anna went back to her dad, probably more confused than ever.

The judging occurred soon after that, and we wound up winning. Between Pam’s picture perfect pumpkin pie and this, Steph was quite a baker, though she never would have dreamed she could prepare whole meals well. After trying too hard, a few years later she became an excellent cook. And, Michelle ended up winning the competition when it was her turn, too, though it was held a few weeks earlier.[512]

Jesse - Tues. Nov. 12 - Jesse’s Appendix:[513]

At this point, I still was too embarrassed about not having graduated to tell. I’d gotten rid of much of my stubbornness, but I still had it– one of those things was that I didn’t want to go to the doctor. Part of that was that I was worried about my own dad, and didn’t want to find out these pains I was having were the same thing he had, even though they were further down than his.

Then, there was another problem; Danny was named the Bay Area’s most eligible bachelor on the 13th by this magazine. The day it came out, he had ladies calling him for

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[511] “Gotta Dance,” the bakeoff is canon for all sisters (“Pigs, Pies, and Plenty of Problems.”) It happens a tad earlier in the book than it does in the TV 5th season, but this is still okay as a time for a harvest festival, and shows what happened in both universes.

[512] “Pigs, Pies, and Plenty of Problems”

[513] The twins are exactly five years after Michelle in books, but Jesse’s appendicitis wouldn’t move. Two weeks before “Bachelor of the Month,” even if he’s stubborn and waits he’d be out of the hospital by the time of that episode, as Danny had been on dates for twelve days.

dates. With Nicky and Alex three months old, we were really busy taking care of them. The girls all helped, even Michelle, but things were really hectic.

Being the at home parent didn't help. By Sunday, after I'd spent part of the previous day in bed, Becky insisted that I go to the ER. I said I felt fine, but the others could tell I was sick. So, Becky said the hospital was building an Elvis wing. Yeah, crazy, I know. But, I fell for it.

I might not have if I hadn't been feeling like I was. She got me in the car, and took me to the emergency room. It was too late before I realized she'd tricked me.

The doctors said I was in bad shape, but not life-threatening yet. Still, it was a good thing she'd gotten me in, my appendix could have ruptured any day. There was already a bit of infection, so I had to stay after it was removed, since I'd put it off.

Vicki Larson, who filled in while Becky was on maternity leave, and now did the weather, filled in so Becky could be at the hospital for me; Joey watched the boys, and Mrs. Taylor was there when the girls got home, so he could go to work. I came home the 20th and rested a few days, then was good as new.

Danny cancelled a few dates to be home since Becky was at the hospital for me. So, Michelle didn't miss him a whole lot. He was there almost every evening for her. Danny went on a date with Vicki on the 26th, a couple days before Thanksgiving.

Joey – Nov. 26 – Michelle's Night Out – with Joey:

As noted, Michelle wasn't missing Danny nearly as much. With someone being really sick, Danny knew not to do too much. Still, her devotion to him was there; at this age, girls love their dads, and sometimes jokingly ask if they can marry them.

Well, Danny had made a date that morning on the show. With others, he'd told her before that he'd be going out, and we'd worked out a little rotation of who would be there in the evening and tuck her in. However, this one was unexpected. Being more sensitive because of the lesser Jesse influence, she wanted to go, too.

Michelle asked Steph to take her to see Danny. Steph and she went down to my room, and I took both of them out to eat. Since they were with me, nobody got in trouble. It wasn't quite Michelle's bedtime yet. Michelle just had her dessert on that date, instead of having a light snack before bedtime; and, of course, Steph's was later.[514]

Becky - Dec. 18, 1991 – D.J. mentions the Spain trip:

At age five, D.J. still called her "Strawberry Shortcake" a little, and would at really tender moments from time to time later. Still, Michelle was outgrowing that, and becoming a great, tender, caring helper with Nicky and Alex.

I had to laugh at how D.J. tried to determine how ready Michelle was to let go. Today, I overheard her and Michelle on the couch as D.J. read to her. She asked Michelle, out of the blue, "How would you feel if I went away for a couple months?" I wondered if she had plans, but I didn't say anything.

"Are you going on vacation?"

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[514] It's possible "Bachelor of the Month" doesn't happen in books. However, fan consensus was that Danny was out with Vicki, and Michelle did this since the girls are more in control. Jesse's appendix would lead to Danny canceling dates, but, on the other hand, he would still have some, and with Michelle more attached to him, she'd miss him about the same with a date so suddenly made. With the twins born in August, Becky would be back at work by November. Vicki was offered the weather position in "Play It Again, Jess." So, Vicki would accept that job, then leave for Chicago in January as on TV.

"Well, sort of; it's something with the school, and I might have a chance to do it."

"Why can't you go to school here?"

They couldn't help but notice me chuckling at that one. "Hey, Aunt Becky. I was just telling Michelle, there's a chance our class might get to go to Spain this summer." She explained, "It wouldn't be during school time, Michelle. You'd stay here and play and have fun with everyone else while I went. Everyone else would stay."

Michelle seemed comfortable. D.J. wasn't as close as a real mom would be, and Stephanie was filling D.J.'s shoes more. Michelle had questions over the next few days, but D.J. emphasized how she'd still have lots of people around.

Danny – Further improvements in Michelle; D.J. finds a sitter:

Michelle's behavior was very good. She listened to her sisters as well as any good kid would her mom. She'd bonded with and felt comfortable with all of us.

D.J. always treated her younger sisters well. Once, she failed to find a sitter for them. Instead of taking them to the movies, she'd have stayed home and played games with a guy or something. However, she found someone. She dropped them at Michelle's friend Cassie's. One of her friends happened to be babysitting there.

By the time D.J. came back from her date, the girls had been on a merry-go-round of sitters, Steph had left five messages, and they were back home with Allie's mom. There was no trouble, since D.J. had gotten a sitter.[515]

Kimmy had come home with D.J., since her work at the box office was over. D.J. had told her she'd tried to call Mrs. Taylor before dropping her sisters off, and Kimmy blurted, "Well, of course she wasn't home, Deej, she was right here." D.J. then made a comment wondering what her mom would have said to that. I wish I knew. D.J. said she thought about suggesting Kimmy get tested for a learning disorder, but she was too busy thinking of other things, and her advisors said it probably wouldn't help.

D.J.:

Michelle didn't always talk about her feelings, but few kids do all the time. Steph might have, but she was a rare breed. Still, Michelle often talked with us about them, or at least with Steph or I. She didn't wander off and do her own thing like Jesse. She never tried to run away because she didn't like the rules.[516]

There were little things like when she'd go to the park alone if she knew Steph was there a couple times.[517] But, even the last was only a few blocks away, like going to a friend's house. Overall, her behavior was excellent. It was things like that that convinced me, more and more, that I could go.

I wouldn't go so far as to say it was as good as if our mom had lived - there were clearly things that could have been better. I made mistakes with her just because I had little experience, though I acted as much like Mom as I could. Maybe by fourth or fifth grade she was as good as she would have been then.

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[515] A comical version of "Sisters In Crime" that occurs from this more mothering D.J., as she would never sneak her sisters into a movie, since she's more mature. A minority felt the date was never even made.

[516] "Lucky, Lucky Day" - Michelle hadn't had Jesse trick her into thinking it meant leaving for good, because in third grade in this book, she almost does for something that isn't bad, falling for some junk mail that made her think she was a millionaire. In fact, her thinking is like Stephanie's when she wrecked Joey's car - a further sign of how much she takes after her sisters, not Uncle Jesse.

[517] "A Dog's Life"

However, other than occasionally getting sent to her room for ten minutes, she did very little that required punishment. Every kid's going to get a few timeouts, but you know what was really special? She never complained or acted bitter. She sadly accepted her punishment and learned easily. She had become just like Stephanie and I.

Stephanie – Feb. 12, 1992 – Life as a PA:

We never had any problems with Michelle. I didn't know if D.J. could help as much with this problem. But, Uncle Jesse was like the wildest kids, at least.

Here's what happened. Michelle kept sending more and more kids to me. As would have happened even if D.J. only reacted, I found myself having more and more responsibility. Michelle would point out kids arguing on the playground, for instance. I helped with some smaller kids, and with a teacher's help even stop a rumble with some fifth graders way back in October. So, they knew I could do it.

I'd gotten my own office recently, though I'd mostly handled the in between things, too big for teachers, too small for the principal. A coupld times, instead of sitting kids in the hall, the teachers sent them to me, because of my reputation.

Now, they were asking me if I wanted to do the ultimate. Dad had always said if it got really bad he wanted to take care of it; it never did. He felt parents should be the ones to do it, he explained to me, because they're the ones who have the most love and whom the kid will accept it from more. However, he also noted that if the school felt it necessary, and if I felt up to it, I could handle it.

Therefore, I went to Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky, instead of D.J.. Uncle Jesse told me about how wild he'd been as a kid; and yes, it had happened a handful of times, in what seemed like hundreds of times he'd been sent to the principal. Aunt Becky pointed out something else, though, that helped me more to decide.

She noted that kids where she grew up were used to stricter rules, and they accepted and adjusted to it quite well. They knew they were loved, they just knew their boundaries and wouldn't cross them. It was rougher in those days, but Becky said a well run school should be a bit tougher than home, because you're always going to do things at home that you'd never do in public. Sure, kids should be allowed some leeway, but the school wasn't asking me to be an 1800s teacher; they were asking if I was willing to hit as a last resort. I finally decided I could.

I've never backed down from a challenge. I've always had the attitude that I'm going to go out there and accomplish. That determination really helped.

Jesse – Feb. 26:

By the time Steph had to fwap a kid for the first time – a mean fifth grader – she accepted it as necessary for the worst kids, when nothing else worked. It was hard for her to fathom nothing else working, I think, but talking to me had helped.

She only ever used a hand, as we'd said, and as D.J. told her later that evening. D.J. explained how Pam had been with me, and also told her about the idea of light fwaps that only hurt the feelings that evening. Steph felt one – a cross between a fwap and a smack if the kid was older – was best, but said she'd keep that in mind for later. It was all a whirlwind of change for her to start thinking like that, but it's like D.J. told her a couple years ago when she first heard of the concept. She just had to tell herself the kid felt loved anyway, just like D.J. always told herself at that age.

Joey – Mar. 21 – Danny Not Forcing Others to Clean:

Danny was in his spring cleaning mood like he often got, but he'd grown very well, too; he never forced it on any of us, though there were a few spells the first couple years. That's normal with a loss like Pam's, though.

Becky – Mother's Day, 1992 – Other Moms:

This day was very special for me. It was my first as a mom. I got lovely flowers; I loved to work in the garden. I'd planted a lot just after I moved in in late 1990, so there were always flowers there – or at least mud.[518] Comet didn't bother them much; if he did, we had the squirt bottle, but he didn't get into mischief. He was a great dog.

The girls had done special things with me before, just as they had with Jesse's and Danny's moms. But, Jesse's parents would be out of the picture more and more with Nick's heart condition and trips to Palm Springs. Danny's mom was in Connecticut and traveling to see some of her other kids; this summer would be the time to visit. So, they all took me out for Mother's Day. Michelle also made special things for me in school, as always. When Steph was little, she'd make them for both grandmas.

Even if D.J. hadn't been proactive, after another year or two it wouldn't have made sense to visit a grave when Pam was in Heaven. After that card last year, it felt like the torch had been passed. They didn't feel the need as much by now, and only went next year as an experience to help someone else, who will be mentioned later. They could easily remember her without going there, and even Danny could.

Danny - May 21, 1992 – Michelle growing closer to Danny:

Had D.J. not been in high school, her departure might have been a bit tougher on Michelle. She was attached to D.J., but not like a little kid with her mother. Michelle was always quite close to me, and in a stage here of heavy devotion to Daddy. Our family was very closely knit, and she had fun no matter who watched her.

D.J. had prepared her for the possibility she might spend time in Europe. Little things like the room change, so Michelle could look over at night and see Steph. And, big things, like promising to be back for Michelle's sixth birthday party. Once Michelle was assured D.J. wouldn't miss that, and would write frequently, she was satisfied.

The sendoff a couple weeks later wasn't too rough. Michelle felt a little lonely at first, but Allie remained for Steph. Therefore, Stephanie and she spent loads of time playing with Michelle. They overdid the attention a bit, but that turned out to be good practice for a girl Steph would meet soon.

Michelle also got special treats from me. For instance, since she went to bed so readily and was so good otherwise, I let her get me up for a midnight snack if she woke up and was hungry. She did that the first couple weeks, but not much later.[519]

In addition, Steph, Michelle, and I flew out for two weeks with my mom, just the three of us. Michelle was very attached to my mom,[520] for the fact she didn't live in the

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[518] "There's Gold In My Backyard" is one of several books where this is mentioned. We don't see way back, but there is lots of mud in "Terror In Tanner Town," so it's quite possible that a garden would soon be there. It would be one more chore TV Michelle can do as punishment, too.

[519] A couple "Dear Michelle" books mention this privilege; not mentioned on TV as not as common.

[520] "Dear Michelle - How Will Santa Find Me" mentions this closeness though she's in Connecticut. Being together a lot till she was almost five, plus times like these - and visits by Danny's mom out to San

area anymore. We'd spent many fun times before she left, though.

This isn't saying that Michelle didn't miss D.J.. There were signs she'd missed her when D.J. arrived home. If she had a question in the middle of the night, like whether birds sneeze or fish yawn or something, she'd go to D.J. - even if it was two in the morning.[521] She went in and snuggled a bit more with her in the morning at first, too.

D.J. – Much more contact in Spain:

I wrote Michelle and Stephanie at least once a week from Spain, usually twice. I even called once. This would never have happened without my attachment to them. The time difference made it hard, but I wanted to try, anyway.

Michelle was at the age where she was still a bit too anxious for presents when I returned, of course. Still, overall things went very well. I didn't feel near the pressure I might have just reacting, and so I didn't try to distance myself from things back home to preserve my sanity. She wasn't the only one who loved getting mail from me.

Joey – Jul. 14, 1992 – D.J. calls home:

Michelle was having lots of fun playing "house" with Stephanie and Allie, as they took turns being the various people in our family. She ran to answer the phone in the middle of their game, and quickly turned to Stephanie. "It's from D.J.. Do we accept charges? What are charges?"

Stephanie quickly called for us to come to the phone. Danny went to the phone in his office while I took the kitchen phone and said we would. Jesse and Becky huddled together in the living room, while Steph and Michelle went upstairs with Allie.

"How many phones do you have?" Allie wondered, shocked.

"Lots; and nobody's using Joey's now. There's three different numbers, counting D.J.'s and Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky's," Stephanie said while Michelle talked.

We let Michelle tell all about her last few days, and how much fun it was. D.J. loved hearing about their trip to Connecticut.

"Super. Hey, guess what? Remember my last postcard, when I said there was something really special? I figured you'd like to hear in person. His name's Steve."

"Steve?" and "A boy?" rose from the girls' lips in their room.

Danny was nervous. "Deej…you went to learn about a culture, not a boy."

"I know, and Steve is so sweet. He'll be a senior, and he's on the wrestling team." She told a little bit more about him. "It's so romantic."

We all enjoyed talking with her, which kept Danny from babbling about this boy. We knew there were great chaperones, but still, for some reason, the idea of her meeting a boy there hadn't seemed possible to him.

Kimmy even got on the line, just to get the time straight. "I hadn't thought about calling; let's see, nine hours, right?" We said it was, but didn't say we had just finished breakfast; Allie had come over early. "Cool, I'll remember that."

She quickly put D.J. back on the line, and we all said "I love you," which she said back. Then, Danny insisted on talking to Steve.

"Dad, I called collect, remember? You're paying for this call."

"Oh; right. I'll be waiting at the airport to meet him." Once we said goodbye, D.J.

Francisco - can easily account for this.

[521] As one of the early Stephanie books mentions her doing at age seven

said later she couldn't help but wonder if he'd camp out for a few days. Thankfully, he'd grown accustomed enough to change that that wasn't necessary.

Kimmy called home, too. She knew there was nine hours' difference. There was just one problem with that. She added nine hours from Spanish time, whereas she should have subtracted nine hours. She called at noon the next day, but it was 3 AM our time. At least she called her parents, and not us.

Stephanie - Aug. 1, 1992:

With Allie helping, we had our own Dennis the Menace comic sequence in the airport - the good one of the 1980s onward, who just got a bit wild sometimes and needed time in the corner. While D.J. was coming home from Spain, Michelle led us into the airport lounge where Allie asked if she could play the piano. The piano player, who was ready for a break anyway, asked if she could play, and then graciously let her after testing her a bit. Allie had taken lessons since she was five.

Allie played "Do Re Mi" well enough to earn a few bucks that day. I considered joining in singing, but Michelle was introducing herself to all the patrons; one of whom happened to be Hank Ketcham himself.

After we chatted, she ran out to see a dog. I informed her that it was a working dog, but she insisted, "He's not working. He's just sitting there." Thankfully, the blind fellow who had him was very nice in answering our questions.

Finally, after going to several other places, I gave in and used some of the money Allie had earned to buy a child restrainer, one of those that looks like a leash.

Soon after that, Dad found us. He offered us $2.50 each for babysitting. I thought all that running was worth $10 apiece. He went up to $3 each, and Allie insisted, "Take it, Steph. I will if you won't." That wasn't like her - she was quite shy and reserved, as at my play "wedding" back in first grade.[522] Considering her tone, I took Dad's offer, too.

I guess that's what Dad meant when he talked about needing a friend to help when you get a little too crazy sometimes, like Joey would do for him.

Anyway, D.J. would still have plenty of time for us, but she had a boyfriend, Steve, now. She'd told us about him over the phone. Dad even tried to talk to him till reminded he was paying for the long distance call. While she'd been slowly giving me job, I felt like the torch had truly been passed to me now.

It had been. And, Michelle was about to help me a lot sooner than I dreamed.

[522] "Middle Age Crazy"

Interlude - What Books Could Be Canon?

With TV, it's easy to say what's canon, though some shows have two timelines. For example, M*A*S*H has one where Colonel Blake serves till 1952, one where Colonel Potter, B.J., and even Winchester come in December, 1950. They needed to fit a three-year war into eleven seasons. Some series have an implied break between episodes - months or even a year. Most are chronological enough you can rely on certain events happening after others, if not every episode or exact dates.

However, when dozens of books occur within a year, a formula is needed.

1. The earlier the book, the more likely it's canon. Earlier plots set up stories and characters. Characters are firmly established later on TV – one can argue pilots have non-canon bits with no problem. However, earlier books are closer to the original intent. For instance, Michelle was in 4th grade in 1995-96. In a family history like this, she can't go wild over a fad or group only big among 4th graders in 2000, even if other things in the book are canon.[523] Technology is also an issue - what existed? Websites in books lead to two books being labeled "Nicky and Alex Adventures" and listed with the post-2000 TV Universe part. A Sisters book dealing only with e-mail could easily happen in 1995-96, so it's here. This isn't set in stone, but it's very close to it.

2. Canon books are true to book, not TV, characters, though some books are TV canon. A consistently different character - more polite, compassionate Michelle, for instance - is fine. Characters are not set in stone. Different factors can change them, as seen. Little in TV seasons 5-8 happened in books, almost nothing in season 8. A book can be TV canon if characters are closer to TV ones, or it doesn't fit in the book timeline. A few are canon in both or for Nicky and Alex. Some are part TV, and part Book canon. Not all background facts in books about the Tanners are canon. Each fact must fit in with established background for the TV characters unless there is a plausible reason not to. (Becky coming earlier and Michelle's earlier birthday are quite plausible, as was shown. Danny and Pam marrying after college is not; it violates too much.)

3. What fits well and works best together is canon. The number of books where Stephanie baby-sits often, for instance, means if the above two are true of a book, its plot is usually canon, though there are notable exceptions. A classmate of Michelle's (who never changes classes in elementary school) who appears, then never appears again, usually bars that book from the Book timeline. Such a character doesn't fit with other books, though the book can be TV canon. (Steph changes classes, so one-shot characters in a Stephanie book can fit.) Books can't use the excuse that there's too little time to include someone, like a half hour show can.

4. Entertainment value is also big. Let's face it, people have different favorites, but some almost everyone liked. These are necessary to include if they can at all fit somewhere, because that's what they're for - to entertain.

The "Dear Michelle" series is a special case. It features a different third grade teacher and mostly different classmates from the first Michelle books. However, there is little conflict of facts, except whether they go on vacation over spring break. Her other

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[523] The name and description of "Ginger Girls" is close enough it's a Spice Girls comparison in 2000's "How To Meet A Superstar." They weren't big in 1995, though. Even if it's different performers, fourth graders don't vote in 1995 based on stars, and boys won't care about a girl band. That's a middle or high school thing. Sharing the fifth grade playground, mentioned also, is the issue Michelle becomes President on. Since "If I Were President" alludes to that group, a small group Jesse knows by that name comes to speak on that grade's level with no problem; more in TV section under "Rest of the Story."

class could have a student paper and we're not told; even in books we're not told every life event. Mandy is there earlier in this series, but that can be ignored, with other parts canon, like when Gia replaces Allie and Darcy in a couple Stephanie books that are in TV canon. In other words, Cassie could fill both roles. Fewer recess periods are implied, but that's like fads in rule one above. One can discount it and keep other parts of the book, as it's not essential to a plot. It just makes things more like 2004 for 2004 readers. And, the implication might be incorrect. It's not clear there are fewer.

Everything else gels well. It's called by some a different book universe, but the "Dear Michelle" series is canon. If Michelle is with this class, things are the same as in later books (Jeff is in it), with one rude classmate possibly replacing Rachel. Classes could be rearranged for fourth; just as Michelle's with different friends anyway. Most likely, though, using the "earlier books" principal, Cassie fills both roles in the first two "Dear Michelle" situations – or some other friend from later books does – and Michelle helps the school with advice. (1-2 questions seem to be from a child younger than third grade.) A conflict between "Dude of My Dreams" and "Dear Michelle: I've Got Bunny Business" over what happens during spring break could be settled by rule 4 above (choose your favorite), but the zoo's camp for kids to learn about animals (especially bunnies) can be the first two days of summer, as the Stephanie book can have Samantha bonding with Joey, as will be shown.

Books help set the timeline from 1993-97, in the same way as TV episodes. Your narrator hasn't read every one but got good advice on them. A few are where they fit best in the calendar, as noted above. Ages being off a year aren't as important as the grade, but effort is made to keep them accurate. While not all books are mentioned, one can glean where their favorites are (or if they're in the TV Universe or NetU instead.) Note that this presumes they don't get a week off for Thanksgiving, fall break, and a few more days off for Christmas all the same year.

As with episodes, not every canon book is footnoted, though most are. Some are footnoted before (in the Book or TV Universe) and not here.

As a final note, the "Sam Series" tries to keep up with "Full House" book canon, and is created and written by Paul Austin, who goes by Paul Williams on the internet, and RKORadio on fanfiction.net at this time. This series is available there or by e-mailing him at paul.austin@myboomerang.com.au or paul_b_austin@hotmail.com. A list of the Sam Series in order is here:

1. Demons and Angels; 2. Stephanie Tames the Shrew; 3. Samantha's Great Escape (Goodbye Sam, Hello Samantha); 4. Principal Mandy and Nanny Stephanie; 5. Samantha Strikes Back; 6. Samantha Goes to Paris; 7.Part Of The Family; 8. Valentine Bloom; 9. Full House: The Next Generation; 10. Pamela Grows Up. Just Like Family and Samantha and Friends are ficlets between numbers 3 and 4. Others may come later.

X: THE TORCH IS PASSED - Aug., 1992-May, 1995:

1. Sam: Aug. 1992-Mar. 1993:

Jesse - Aug. 31, 1992 – Difference Makers:

In everyone's life, a special person exists of whom it could rightly be said, "They'd never be where they are if not for that person." Or, at the least, such a person has a chance to make that difference, if they choose. Pam was that way in my life.

The wonderful thing is, each of us can be that special someone who can drastically improve a life somewhere, at some point in our lives. I've shaped lives, too, mostly my own family's.

When those two roles intersect, wonderful things can result. Dreams can be fulfilled. Lives can be altered in special ways, too special for words.

Monday night, before the first day of school, my nieces prayed about the school year, and Stephanie's job as principal's assistant. Meanwhile, in another part of town, a little five-year-old girl, who looked more like she'd just turned four, laid awake unsure if that someone could come. She'd known nobody like that. Not even her parents.

Her mother had chosen one of two very rich suitors back in '85 - the one who lived in our school district - but she was married to her work from the start. Their maid had spent more time with baby Sam than her parents ever did, that's why she developed as well as she had verbally. Otherwise, she was just thrown into a daycare and forgotten - her parents were too busy to try to find a nanny.

So it was that child cried herself to sleep, frustrated that nobody seemed to love her, and wondering if she'd ever find anyone to care at this new place, or if it would be more of the same. And yet, the next day, when the daycare van brought her to school, her life intersected with that of Stephanie Judith Tanner.

None of us would ever be the same.

Stephanie - Sept. 3, 1992 – First contact:

We all thought she was just another Uncle Jesse. Ragged t-shirt and jeans, hair so short she looked like a boy, and a glower that made it seem like she had the world's largest chip on her shoulder. That glare didn't belong on a five-year-old.

Many people might have brushed her off or been really harsh. I couldn't be, though. I was as tough as I had to be. Her rebellious outbursts that got her sent to me in only her third day of school required love and compassion, too, though.

She was sent for one of many outbursts, throwing stuff and refusing to listen. As I told another kid about Michelle's first day, and how I'd helped her, Sam started pinching kids in the outer office - hard, too. I pulled her into my office, but she wouldn't sit in timeout. She started playing echo, and pushed the chair away.

She was clever enough not to copy when I said the words, "I need a long timeout." Instead, she angrily bolted for the door.

I cuddled her tightly in my lap. I could tell she wasn't going to stay herself. So, I sat down with her, facing the wall, and had a long talk with her. A stern, yet loving talk, followed by a couple minutes of sitting and facing the wall myself, with her on my lap, so she couldn't get up. She struggled, but eventually let me hold her.

We embraced when I let her up - I had a feeling she didn't want that hug to end, but I couldn't comprehend why.

Her shell would be tough to crack, but I'd gotten through that I cared about her.

Michelle – Fri., Sept. 4:

When I got to school the next morning, I was playing and talking with Cassie and with Denise Frasier, who had been moved to another first grade class. Suddenly, this girl I didn't know got out of a daycare van and looked at me like she was frightened.

At first, I thought Jeff had put a spider in my hair. Cassie was shy and scared easily, though, and she wasn't scared. So, I doubted there was a spider.

Once I felt my head and detected no insects, Denise went over to talk to this girl. Much to my surprise, Denise told me this girl was fearful because Stephanie threatened dire things if she ever hurt me. I'd heard there was a really wild kid in Kindergarten. I figured she was the one.

"Hi," I said, walking up to her and extending a hand. "It's okay. I'm not a mouse. Besides, if there was a mouse you would stand on a chair and scream. At least, Joey says that's how they do in the cartoons," I joked bluntly, explaining who Joey was. Sensing some fright, I changed to a reassuring tone and commented, "I know you'll be nice to me. Stephanie's just trying to protect me."

She seemed to like my tender, compassionate tone. Her scowl diminished a little as she introduced herself as Sam. It returned, however, as Jeff said, "Sam I am. Would you like green eggs and ham?"

"That's just Jeff. He's nuts."

He may have thought I was nuts my first day last year; I raised my hands to my head and talked like Bullwinkle. He liked to act crazy, though – a real class clown. His mom brought him over to apologize once last year; he squirted ink on me with a trick pen. Steph teased sometimes that he wanted my attention because he liked me. I didn't want to believe it. He was too silly for me at that age, with all his jokes.

"You don't have to look mean at him," I told Sam. "Just tell him, 'Jeff, please don't make fun of my name.' Or, make a 'green eggs and ham' rhyme of your own. Like this - 'I would not like them in the dirt. I would not like them down my shirt.' Uncle Joey invents lots of those."

She wouldn't tell me much about herself. She was frustrated by having more rules - I think that's how she interpreted my suggestion. Still, she seemed to understand I wanted to be friends. She also appeared to recognize why Stephanie was so protective, when I told her we didn't have a mother.

Despite all that, I might have thought she was partly deaf if she hadn't responded to Jeff's teasing from behind her.

Stephanie - Background:

I'd begun to look into Sam's background, after the previous day's problems. She looked unkempt, and in fact hardly ever bathed, though she showered in the locker room of the daycare's building. Plus, she had clean clothes. Her main diet was junk food, aside from what she ate at daycare. She was there from 7:30 in the morning to 6:30 every night, and sometimes her parents wouldn't show up till an hour later to get her.

Of course, there were good parents who had no choice but to put their kids there, but those parents tried to work with the center. And, truthfully, this center was not run very well. A preschool in the same building was much better, and was the one Michelle had gone to, in fact. It's just that Sam's preschool wouldn't have had any contact with

Michelle's, being a younger class and in the afternoon. Plus, Sam's behavior meant she mostly just in the daycare part anyway. Nicky and Alex were in a different one later; the director liked Elvis just like Uncle Jesse did.[524]

The daycare never seemed able to contact Sam's parents. Her parents gave her enough food, clothing, and shelter to survive, but nothing in the way of love. Dad described her as a trophy - he said she sounded like a kid who the parents only valued to be able to say they had one, and brag about her.

The more I learned about her, the more determined I was to help. Dad and I talked, and got in touch with the daycare center this evening. They told me contacting her parents would be useless - something I learned that weekend when I tried. She'd gotten her necessary shots to get into Kindergarten, but hardly ever saw a doctor otherwise. The school nurse was going to check Monday for lice or scabies.

Danny – Sat., Sept. 5 – Working with the Doctor:

I called our pediatrician, Dr. Landress. He confirmed my hunch - as it looked now, this was just a child who'd fallen through the cracks. There was no evidence of anything the authorities would need to be concerned with, since she got the physical things she needed. Still, he said it was a good idea to get her in to see him, to make sure. With his schedule being so full – Monday was Labor Day, too - we got an appointment with his associate, Dr. Fuller. She could see Sam late Wednesday.

D.J. – Sept. 9:

Dr. Fuller was nice. Her husband had a younger cousin about my age who wanted to become a fireman, but I was too busy with Steve to think about it. We'd each seen her a couple times. Michelle told Sam it was okay; she wouldn't get any shots.

How did we get her in? Dad had inquired Friday after school about her diet, since we'd learned how little attention she got. She was a bit chubby. We used that and said the school nurse wanted to encourage a more healthy and regular diet. So, a permission form was faxed to the daycare, for Steph, as PA, under the school nurse's orders, to get her in to be seen for that. Sam's report said she'd had her shots, but her parents did only the minimum, not getting regular checkups every year for her.

The mom scribbled her signature that evening, not paying attention but saying they hadn't had time to make follow-up visits like her pediatrician suggested.

Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky could both be a bit stubborn at times, and they each told Steph, when Becky called from Japan - Jesse was on a two-week tour there - if she wanted to get Sam in to see anyone else, she should just do it. "Don't wait for their permission," Becky advised. "If they hurried that much on this, without even thinking, it'll probably never come for much else, either."

Stephanie was becoming very determined with Sam, and I figured she'd run with that. She did. The parents said they'd be grateful if we or the school handled it from then on, so we did. It's like they were glad to have caretakers. They may have even hoped the daycare would bug us about Sam's behavior, instead of them.

The daycare reported many behavior problems, each of which the parents ignored. The daycare tried their best to put her in timeout consistently, but she was getting sneakier and rougher with her behavior. It wasn't quite to where they'd consider kicking

[524] "Breaking Away," it's a different building than the one Michelle was in for preschool

her out, but they said it could get that bad.

Sometimes, one needs most to guide with love and kindness, and be good role models; that's what true leadership is. That's what I did with Kimmy, and Mom had tried to do with the Gibblers. This case would be a lot harder, though, because the parents wouldn't be led; and, as we learned only later, really didn't pay any attention to her.

Kimmy – Wed., Sept. 9 – Why Run for Class President?:

I always enjoyed helping, because D.J. encouraged me. As it turned out, I did; I gave them lots of comic relief this year. I ran for class president.

D.J. and I had long ago realized we wouldn't be Congresswomen. She found other fields more enticing, I came to grips with my limits, and we both came to grips with money and the fact it would require one of us to move out of the district.

I still wanted to be in charge of something, to put my own unique stamp on it. And, the Party Hearty party needed a Presidential candidate for tenth grade.

They were looking for something of a dupe; they planned a slate of candidates. I was thrilled; a position just for me. Of course, D.J. stopped it from being a real nightmare for the school, as she at least kept me from doing some of my stranger stuff. But, things like teachers rollerblading in the halls still got suggested.[525]

I guess I felt empowered by D.J.; I might have just thought I wasn't going to amount to much otherwise, but being with D.J. did something to me. Something that Stephanie wanted to help Sam see, that she was special and didn't have to feel really bad. Unfortunately, it would be a rather long road till they got there.

Becky - Sept. 10 – Needing a friend:

Sam wasn't the only kid with problems, but she probably took up half the visits to Steph the first couple weeks. Such things didn't demand a whole lot of time, but this was one of the longest today. Sam came to Stephanie herself for the first time; well, a teacher's aide brought her to the office, and she waited quietly outside the door.

That first visit by Sam without being sent excited Stephanie. Ironically, Allie was getting some copies of papers for their teacher, and Steph wasn't there.

"Well, hello," Allie said cheerfully as the teacher left, assuming Allie would take Sam inside the office. Sam continued to look somewhat sullen as Allie – normally very shy – tried to sound excited and perky. "I bet you came looking for Stephanie…oh," she finished worriedly. She noticed a little wet spot as Sam asked where Stephanie was. "She's up in her classroom; I just came down to get some copies. Mr. Posey?" She whispered the problem to the principal, and while one of the office aides went to get Stephanie, Allie took Sam into the bathroom.

Stephanie and the school nurse arrived a couple minutes later. As the school nurse helped Sam with a new diaper in a stall, Allie and Stephanie whispered outside the bathroom. "Rude awakening, huh?" Stephanie asked.

"Yeah; I didn't think it was possible for a kid not to be potty trained at five."

"Same here, till Sam told me a couple days ago." Just one more mountain to climb, Stephanie told herself.

Of course, it's not unheard of for a child to still be in diapers at that age even with

[525] As would all weird things she did and suggested in the TV Universe part, mentioned at times through that section. Dreaming of being Congresswomen from episode "Tanner vs. Gibbler"

the best parents. Still, it's extremely rare – something that would have shocked most kids at Stephanie's age. Things like this galvanized her even more.

"I didn't want to embarrass her, Allie, but, well, guess you found out, huh?"

"That's not the main reason she came down. I think it leaked a bit on the way here. She wanted to talk about something else. And, probably get a hug."

Stephanie agreed solemnly as Allie talked about what she'd told Sam, how she'd known Stephanie since Kindergarten, and in fact she was the one to comfort Stephanie a lot at first, since Pam had died mere months before that.

"Sam thought I did a pretty good job with her," Allie said in a slightly louder voice. As the nurse and a now cleaned Sam came out of the restroom, Sam's eyes lit up. She ran to Stephanie and gave her a big hug.

"I'm sure you did. Thanks, Allie." Allie went back to the classroom, and Stephanie and Sam entered the office. In the future, Sam wouldn't remember Allie as much, of course – at times she'd only catch a name, as her main thought was the immense love Stephanie always showed. However, this was still important to help her see others, not just the Tanners, would care about her, too.

Stephanie - Taking the lead:

Sam felt really lonely, and needed someone to talk to; then, as she thought about wandering in that big school, she must have wet a little; her parents never bothered to help with anything like that, and it was hard for the daycare staff to train her. Still, that wasn't her only concern this day.

I praised her big time for using her words, though we'd need to work on that a lot more in the months to come, of course. I was very grateful that she felt able to come. I hoped Sam kept seeking me out when she was sad or needed a friend.

I'd gone to her before and after school a couple times to cuddle with her, just so she didn't think it could only happen when she misbehaved. She really seemed to relish that. It would become a lot more common in the coming weeks.

Today, I put a few stickers on a chart for her; I'd begun to create a reward system with stickers to see if that would help Sam's behavior. It did, over time, but I used every trick in the book.

Sam moaned that her parents were going to leave her with a sitter Saturday night. They often dragged her to these big, fancy parties that would be boring for any kid, with no books or toys or anything, and let her run loose. If they left her at home, it was with sitters, none of whom ever made a return visit. It was like going to a haunted house. Sitters would either do things like put her in the bathroom with a chair blocking the door, or just let her run rampant. The fact none had ever hit her was based more on her smaller size than anything; at least now she could be controlled, though in the days and weeks to come she would begin to grow as her diet improved.

Jesse:

Stephanie mentioned over the phone that they'd probably use Dr. Fuller from then on for Sam. Sam agreed, but only if Steph came, too.

I could tell where this was leading when her parents simply left a message the next day saying to go ahead - we all could. We were powerless to stop it. Not only did we know nobody else was helping, but Steph had that tenacious look when it came to Sam

that said she would accomplish things no matter what anyone else said.

D.J.: Overcoming Her Anxiety From Losing Mom:

Because she'd bonded with me and I'd helped her, Steph was a little less scared of commitment, but as she grew to understand Sam, her desire to bond with her grew; it was something she felt had to be done. Maybe partly because she understood at least a little, though we didn't realize how much Sam had.

Stephanie – Finding a Sitter:

One way in which I was determined to help had come up with what Sam told me that day. After arriving home from school, I called Sam's parents at home and left a message. I told them not to worry - I would find a sitter for Sam for Saturday.

"Steph, what are you doing?" Joey asked as he walked into my and Michelle's room. He had just come back from doing his Ranger Joe show. And, he saw me with the phone to my ear and a huge list of numbers in front of me.

"Finding a sitter for Saturday night."

"Steph, I know Jesse and Becky are in Japan. But, your dad and I will be here."

"I know. It's not for us; it's for Sam."

Joey often thought outside the box - unless the box was a TV with cartoons on it. However, even he thought this was a little odd. "Wouldn't that be her parents' job? Wait, they don't leave her alone, do they?" he asked worriedly.

"No. Hey, Mrs. Taylor, are you doing anything Saturday?…You are? Well, did Allie tell you about Sam?…Yeah, well, I'm trying to find a sitter for her for Saturday night….Okay, thanks, anyway." I hung up and turned toward him. "Sam doesn't like how mean some sitters act. And, it's never the same one, just like with the daycare workers, it's some chain place, and they're usually not staffed well. Few people stay long, either. She needs someone consistent to care about her."

"I think she's already got someone," Joey said proudly, putting an arm around me.

"Thanks. I just want to find someone who'll be nice, and willing to be there consistently. Someone who's really gentle, but yet who will lovingly enforce the rules and be tough if they have to be. Unfortunately, D.J. has a date with Steve."

"It'll be rough, the way you say Sam acts. Look, why not just figure it'll be okay and wait till next time, so you have more time to find one?"

"Because, I already told her parents I'd have one lined up."

Joey gave a look that said that while he wouldn't say anything, he could tell that hadn't been a good idea.

"Don't worry, something will turn up."

"Well…" Joey sighed. "I guess you girls have all done your share of volunteering people at the last minute, huh? Look, keep trying to find someone else, but if you can't by then, I'll do it. I might have to stand on my head to keep her entertained, but I think I could manage." His promise made me feel a lot better.

"Thanks. You're the best," I said as we hugged. If he was concerned about keeping her occupied, that showed it could be a real problem. But, somehow, I knew I'd find someone. And yet, I was a little anxious, too, not knowing how it would work.

Joey:

As it turned out, Stephanie's old dance teacher, Karen, was quite willing. She and her steady boyfriend had made plans. However, once Stephanie explained the situation, and said it was "an emergency," they agreed to have dinner over there with Sam.

D.J. – Sat., Sept. 12 – A Sitter for Sam:

Tonight when watching her for the first time, Karen introduced Sam to ballet. She tried to get her to dance a little, too, with some of the music she brought. Sam liked it, but she was still insecure about many things. It wouldn't be till her first Honeybee club meeting, a few months later, that she'd try in public some of what Karen had shown her.

Karen watched Sam several times. Then, a few months later, after several nights of Karen and a couple of Allie's mom, Stephanie found someone consistent; this was around the first of the year.

Her name was Hannah Larkin. She and I went to school together. She had a younger sister named Courtney in the half day Kindergarten program, Sam was in one of two full-day ones. So, they didn't see each other much till that first Honeybee meeting, and then not even after that - just lunch and recess, which Sam had been grounded from a lot those first months; she was just starting to be really good at that point.

Sam often behaved very well for Hannah. However, part of that was because she knew Hannah had a sister in her grade. Especially after she and Courtney became friends, Sam was a little worried for years that any misbehavior around Hannah would cause Courtney to stop liking her. The scars from the emotional neglect weren't obvious like they would have been if there had been physical neglect, but they were there.

Jesse – Sept. 14:

Sam not only had great natural ballet skills, she had a great voice, too. Her singing talent was something Michelle discovered today. She told Sam that next month, instead of performing the play D.J. and Stephanie had played as "Yankee Doodle" in,[526] her first grade class was doing a choir concert. Michelle had an okay voice, but when she invited Sam to sing something with her, she found Sam had a really good one.

It was still nothing like her dancing skills, though.

Danny – Talk with one of the workers:

By now, the daycare had heard of Steph's work with Sam; our work, really, as this was a situation that required a lot of teamwork.

One of two main reasons Sam wasn't in worse shape was that one of the daycare workers was more consistent. The other was the maid, which we'll get to later. The center had had a very high turnover rate, which hurt a lot because Sam had a great need for a consistent caregiver. It was also too crowded.

However, one worker had been there almost since Sam was a baby, several times a week. Her name was Jean, and she was a retired Kindergarten teacher.

She'd taught Sam some letters and numbers, helped her learn to use that quieter, inside voice inside – though Sam still didn't control it as well as most kids of five can, which was something Steph and the school worked with her on a lot. Jean read to her a

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[526] "If I Were President," Michelle mentions playing George Washington in second grade. It's unlikely she'd be in the same play two years in a row, so she probably missed out on being "Yankee Doodle" in first, and easily accepted being Washington in second, since she couldn't be just like them.

lot. Sam had balked a lot on potty usage, though, so Miss Jean hadn't forced things; she had too many other charges to help in that place.

Joey – Why Sam Wasn't More Physical:

One other very valuable thing Jean taught Sam was how to be gentle. You know how you take a toddler's hand and show them what a gentle touch means? That sort of thing. There was lots of repetition, and Sam did what she wanted somewhat often, like that first time she was sent to Stephanie. However, the seeds had been planted.

Once Steph really put her foot down about not hurting others, Sam understood. She had the rule inside her, thanks to Jean's work. Still, even Jean found it hard to discipline her and keep her in timeout. Sam was just getting too wild. She didn't listen to a lot of rules. Sam knew how to behave, but she just didn't like doing it, because of that security and love she was missing. She tried to rely on herself.

Jean might have tried more, had she known how bad things were in Sam's mind. But, with the limited staff and high turnover, Jean was overwhelmed. She didn't have time to investigate how little Sam's parents paid attention to her. To Jean, her role was to help at the daycare as much as possible with all the kids. The other kids had parents who collaborated with them on things. But, Jean – and everyone – figured that, even if the parents didn't co-operate, they were still there emotionally. After all, there were parents who were there emotionally and who let their kids do anything.

What Sam needed most was someone to love her who would be consistent in caring and in enforcing rules in a loving manner. Steph took more time one-on-one with Sam, though of course she had plenty of other kids to help, too. So, she relied on others, like Michelle, to help. Unfortunately, Michelle's attempt to help Sam find more friends was rebuffed at first, because of Sam's attitude.

Michelle – Mon., Oct. 5 - Looking ahead with the Honeybees:

I goofed. I invited Sam to the Honeybees to Sam today. I said they often held meetings at their headquarters - the same building as Sam's daycare and a preschool - though they just as regularly held them at different girls' homes. Well, Sam's bad attitude was a monster today. She asked why anyone would join something with "such dumb uniforms," in her words. I figured she wouldn't want to join for a while.

I should have kept pushing it. Maybe she would have, and it might have helped sooner. I know I was only six, but still, even at this point I was really starting to care about her. Joining the Honeybees was one of the keys to helping Sam feel like people would want to be her friend, and that being good could be fun.

Guests could always be brought and join. Girls were invited by the local chapter one of two times. The first was age five; the second was when they entered Kindergarten. If a girl, like Cassie, was born after school started,[527] and entered Kindergarten when still four, she wouldn't join till the following spring. However, if a girl turned five before entering Kindergarten, like Steph had, they could join either when they turned five or upon entering Kindergarten. If they did neither, it was still open at their birthday each year. Sam's was March 1. Her parents had just thrown away the invitation without opening it. We'd have made sure she got it next year.

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[527] "The Great Pet Project," perhaps other books imply it, too, her birthday seems to be early September

Stephanie – Thu., Oct. 8 – Reporting to help at the daycare, too:

I helped the school in trying to get Sam to listen and feel cared for, even without the Honeybees. I even made the daycare's job easier. They called me as a last resort. They were running out of patience, and worried they'd eventually have to kick Sam out.

It wasn't as much her being physical as just her ability to rile others up. Lots of kids mimic the wilder ones if you're not careful. The way she lashed out, it riled the others up, too. Plus, she did still lash out a bit physically.

That was the problem in this case. She'd scratched some two-year-old who tried to take one of her toys away. They were starting to worry she could really hurt someone. So, once again, I went to work - only this time my office was portable.

Sam was shocked I'd come there - she figured I was just there to help at school. I warned the other kids I would get very loud, then went into the room where Sam was refusing to sit in the corner, and scolded her. I informed her she was never to hurt someone like that again. We talked for quite a while after her timeout about how she felt frustrated, and what to do if she was.

I was emphatic. Sam knew I cared, and that I meant business – hurting others was wrong. She'd have been much worse without a consistent worker like Jean. But, while she listened to Jean, and liked to be read to, Jean had her hands full. She gave timeouts, but wasn't very forceful; a bit like our dad. This kind, elderly lady did a great job. But, Sam needed someone to be tough, too, though, while still showing lots of love.

I had heard about parents who let their kids do anything. I was beginning to envision her as Angelica on Rugrats, wondering if this was the end result of how Angelica acted. They hadn't shown their preteen years at that point; though Angelica improved they never said how. Of course, Angelica was still too much like Lucy in "Peanuts" as a teen; I aimed for much better behavior with Sam.

Jesse – Steph encouraging Sam a lot now:

Steph had plenty of other kids that she helped, of course. However, some weeks, she'd see Sam almost every day, if only just to talk. Sam understood that helping her wasn't Steph's only job. But, unlike the daycare workers, Steph wasn't in charge of the others continually. She had more one-on-one time to devote to Sam.

Steph spent a lot of time talking to Sam, or just cuddling her. That helped Sam warm up to her a lot. She went to Steph a lot at school, for lots of things, by now. Even if she'd just had a nightmare the previous evening. Stephanie was glad to be able to provide Sam with the attention she seemed to be lacking. Especially because of her age, Steph was a little impatient for improvement. And, harder on herself than she needed to be.

Becky – Mon., Oct. 26:

Steph was like one of those kids back in my small home town who kept things running as sort of a junior mother. She reported there to correct Sam a few other times over the next couple weeks. While Sam often kept quiet while Steph lectured, today Sam scratched Stephanie, too, as she talked to her. At that point, Stephanie instinctively smacked her just a bit. It hurt just a tad, and made her cry, which made Steph sad, too.

Stephanie:

I felt frustrated and sad that I'd spanked her, though it only stung for a couple

seconds. Id never done it to younger than a third grader otherwise, and never would. I knew that was what some others might have done. Others might have just begged the parents to transfer her. But, as I hugged her and told her I still cared about her, I felt like I'd failed. After all, we'd never had to even think about that in our family.

We hugged and talked for a few minutes about how she was supposed to behave, and how bad it was to hurt others. We agreed that now she understood that pain hurts and that she should think of others first, instead of letting herself get so carried away. Finally, she sat, with me holding her there.

It was the first time anyone in charge had done that to her, she told me later. Some kid might have hit her back. That was hard to say. Either way, she understood I'd done that because she needed to realize why it was bad to hurt someone else. So, we left it at that. We talked about it, and after this, she was never physical with anyone else.

However, she still had no rules at home, and seemed unable or unwilling to comprehend that rules were made to help her.

I told Dad I wouldn't give up. She needed someone to consistently help. It didn't destroy the bond we had, when I did that. It merely showed her there was a limit that, once she crossed it, would be very sad for her.

I just wished I'd never done it. And yet, sadly, I knew it could happen again.

Joey – Trying to use cartoons:

The way Pam had talked about a kid like Jesse, I could have used Daennis the Menace as an example, talking about light fwaps. Steph wasn't thinking about that, though; she just didn't like the fact that she'd hurt someone so little.

Jesse reminded her that, "Sam knows you care. I mean, it's a shame, but some kids learn better by doing. And, maybe she's the kind that just needed that once."

"Maybe." Steph gloomily got up from the couch as Michelle came in from the kitchen, where she'd had ice cream for dessert before bed. Steph said we were discussing what Sam did and what Steph had done today. "Michelle couldn't imagine anyone doing that a year ago at this time. She's gotten used to the thought, but still…"

"You gave her a hug, right?" Michelle asked.

Steph said she did. Michelle said it was okay then, but Steph wasn't sure.

The next day, though, Sam ran up to Stephanie right away as she got out of the daycare van. She smiled at Michelle as Sam and she hugged, and gave her a "you were right" look. Sam was confident that she cared about her. That's what mattered.

D.J. – Nov. 5 - Three episode differences, and one not:[528]

Stephanie tried so hard to do things just right. She was trying to copy me, in a way. I'd been a great role model, and always wanted to be the best.

About six weeks ago, she had a story to write for English, but couldn't think of anything. She asked Steve and I for ideas, rather than make something up. We decided she should write about that time I got the pie in the face.

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[528] 1. "Radio Days," Steph doesn't write the story; 2. "The Prying Game," most likely Steph doesn't overhear and misinterpret the conversation Steve had over the phone about his cousin's wedding, but her going to someone still plausible even if she had; 3. "Diesigning Mothers," no breakup with Vicki as shown since Danny's more used to change, plus her mother's talk with Danny about marriage may not happen; and, 4. "I'm Not D.J.," she gets her ears pierced. Consensus is that happens; the same desire – popularity – makes her almost join the Flamingoes.

Later, she confessed that she might have been a bit anxious about relationships anyway, since that's how she is, and written about a breakup, but thankfully she didn't. She says she would have likely come to me, though – or at least Dad – if she'd overheard Steve talking about his cousin's wedding, though, or something like that. Actually, we were close enough I'd have likely told her about it, since I was more proactive.

Dad's dating was interesting, too. We all liked Vicki. Her mom was hoping they'd marry fast, but Dad wasn't bothered much by that. First, she didn't push it Thanksgiving weekend when she came. More importantly, Dad was more used to change by now. So, even her redoing the girls' room didn't cause a huge hassle.

Steph wasn't perfect, she tried to get her ears pierced a couple days from now, when Dad had told her to wait, but overall she did a great job with all the kids there. Even the best can sometimes have a small part that wants to be popular. It just goes to show that she was human. That was the only really rebellious thing she did, though.

Danny:

Steph was hard on herself when she messed up, just like usual. I suppose Pam had been just the same when she was a kid. I told Steph, though, the kids at school accepted that she was human. Of course she would make mistakes, everyone does. The important part was did she try hard to do right and accept when she failed.

That was the only time she really messed up, though. Overall, she did a great job - the kids all loved having a PA like her to tie shoes, give hugs, or just to talk to when they needed. It took some free time away from her, but she knew she was helping people when she did it. She made everyone's job a lot easier.

Stephanie – Mon., Dec. 14 – Another Tough Test:

The school nurse, and many others, tried to focus on positive things with Sam. Sometimes that was very hard to do. She'd hit a small growth spurt, and with better nutrition, she'd become very adept at squirming out of my grasp. I really didn't feel like sitting in the corner with her every time.

She responded well when I removed recess, and then again, she didn't. It didn't faze her much, probably because she didn't get along with other kids very well. Sometimes, too, she just tried to treat school as a big recess period.

When I'd sadly fwapped Sam that time over a month earlier, it shocked her enough that her attitude got a bit more compliant, and she didn't test me as much if she did get sent to me at school. However, after about a month, she was back to acting up again, as she really had some control problems.

I'd said bunches of "how rude"s to her lately, it seemed. She kept fighting me today, though, getting a little mean with her taunts, till finally she hollered, "Bite me" when I insisted she sit in the corner. Then, as I had with a few other kids, I just didn't listen to that voice telling me to use my words. And, I gave her a fwap on the bottom; not a big one, but enough to shock her and maybe sting a little.

I hated doing that. She might make Calvin and Hobbes seem like angels, but I still hated hurting anyone, even in their feelings. I gave Sam a big hug when I saw her still weeping out in the hallway. Michelle gave each of us hugs, too; her class happened to be taking a bathroom break.

Later that day, Michelle invited Sam to come with Cassie and her for ice cream.

Aunt Becky took them, and I came, too, since Michelle invited me. Sam really enjoyed it, though she was a little surprised to see me.

Because Cassie was there, we managed to start talking about the Honeybees when she mentioned them. Cassie asked if Sam went. She wasn't privy to Sam's rude rejection when Michelle invited her a couple months earlier.

Thankfully, Sam was so stunned by the love that was being showered on her despite how badly she'd behaved, she decided to go. I guess maybe she really hoped it could be the same thing there. Of course, some of Michelle's stinging comments helped, such as how Sam didn't make too many friends at school, but she might there. Michelle could be super blunt. That wasn't always good, but here, it probably helped Sam's conscience, as well as helping Sam realize that someone who knew her so well was still going to shower love and affection on her.

Michelle – Tues., Dec. 15 - Sam's first Honeybees meeting:

Sam had never been in another person's home, except for the wild, out of control behavior she exhibited at those lavish dinners her parents dragged her to at times.

D.J. said Sam may feel uncomfortable with so many strangers. Steph said she needed me to keep her from acting up; my pleading look could make her listen. So, too, did my very blunt comments yesterday when we went for ice cream. We merged my hive and the one she'd be in for this meeting; it made sense near Christmas.

Thankfully, one of the girls from the half day Kindergarten, Courtney, was there. A few others were, too, though some seemed leery of her. Courtney, however, had heard through her oldest sister, Hannah - D.J.'s friend - about her and figured Sam would be okay. When one girl mentioned that she wouldn't be bad "because Michelle's here, so that means she knows Stephanie's really close behind," that seemed to intimidate Sam a little. I just reminded her that she knew how to be good without Stephanie having to be there. "'You don't get sent to her every day,' I assured her."

"I guess," Sam muttered.

"This is my guest, Sam Burke," I announced, as she seemed a little shy about introducing herself. "Come on, Sam, do you want to say anything?"

She didn't right then, but she quickly warmed up to those who were in what would be her hive. And, as most girls do at this age, some of us started running around during a break, and several were dancing or doing gymnastics.

I raised my eyebrows as I noticed Sam performing some very graceful ballet moves. "Wow, where did you learn that?" I shouted excitedly.

"I've been practicing."

"She is good," another girl said.

"She certainly is," Mrs. Larkin – Courtney's mom and the group hive mother - said enthusiastically. Not knowing Sam's history, she asked, "Do you take ballet, Dear?"

"I'd like to," Sam said sadly.

With my usual exuberance I exclaimed, "Well, you're going to, Sam. You could be a star!"

With lots of uncertainty in her eyes, Sam turned her head slightly and asked, "Do you think I could, Michelle?"

"Of course you can. I didn't know you liked it that much." Actually, I still didn't know at that point - I only knew she looked graceful. However, Steph and my dad had

both said it would be nice to get her into some activities.

We not only started her in ballet quickly, we also signed her up for soccer, which she could play even with her size. She really just ran around her first couple years, but she got better as her ballet helped make her more athletic.

Steph would tease me about being way too thrilled about Sam's skills. I took after D.J. in wanting to be the best in some ways, and Steph in many ways in her excitability, though with my own sometimes blunt style. However, we later learned Sam's self-image meant she needed way more encouragement than most.

And, besides, I figured it made sense. Maybe this would be the start of a Christmas miracle, I thought to myself.

Becky:

We were all waiting for a Christmas miracle, to provide Stephanie with a way to teach Sam; like Helen Keller's teacher found when Helen uttered that sound for "water" that she'd heard before she went deaf, and she was able to communicate.

Sadly, no Christmas miracle was forthcoming. The only thing Steph got out of this fall and early winter was coming along with Danny and I to teach Michelle to ride horses. She needed time assisting a really good kid as a break from helping Sam

If Allie hadn't stayed in San Francisco, this riding would have been done the previous summer, while D.J. was away. However, Steph and Allie had so much fun playing with Michelle, we didn't have time for riding lessons. Instead, Michelle got them as an early Christmas gift.[529] I'd even get them for Steph in a few years.

Danny:

There was no Christmas miracle here, but we noticed improvement. Sam came to Stephanie to talk about everything as the school year progressed. We learned her parents would take the time to go out to a local restaurant for Thanksgiving dinner, but there was no type of family gathering. She usually caused a major commotion there, as her manners were, well, like you'd expect a kid raised by wolves to have. Or, I guess, like Helen Keller had before Annie Sullivan started to get through to her.

Sam really appreciated our concern. At first, she listened mostly because she didn't like Steph's loud yelling. However, as the months passed, she believed more and more that Stephanie really wanted to help her. She didn't always listen to Stephanie, but at least she didn't have that permanent scowl on her face.

Jesse – Stephanie Trying to Help Michelle Understand:

Steph tried to shelter Michelle from a lot of the things Sam told her, unless she knew Michelle could help. She didn't want to scare her younger sister, after all.

Some things were easy for her. For instance, Steph let Sam hide teeth for the tooth fairy in Stephanie's office. Steph told Michelle it was because the family home had an elaborate security system that blocked the tooth fairy.

Others were harder, but Stephanie could still enlist Michelle's help. Among these items was Sam not being fully potty trained. She might not be able to expound on why, but she could always enlist Michelle's help in trying to get Sam trained for keeps, which she was by the end of this school year.

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[529] We know she gets them early, so she can jump by age eight, plus in books, she's so much like D.J.

However, some things weren't so simple. When Michelle started to sound a little greedy for toys as Christmas neared, though, Stephanie sat down with her and had a heart to heart talk about how she wasn't sure Sam would get any presents. She was feeling a bit too anxious for gifts herself, but having someone like Sam tempered that a lot.

She didn't tell her how little Sam's parents cared; that would have been too much even at Steph's age. It wouldn't sink in to Stephanie for a while. Remember, this was even before the situation with Charles, which opened her eyes to the fact not all families had parents who cared. For now, Steph figured the parents were way too busy.

However, Stephanie knew that Sam had very little in the way of love. And, she wanted to shower her with it.

Stephanie - Dec 25 - Sam's first "real" Christmas:

Uncle Jesse had already planned to take us to a local soup kitchen to help feed the needy, just as his dad had done with him. I called Sam today, after the visit. She got stuff, but I wanted to stop by with Michelle and Uncle Jesse, anyway.

"Wow, it's just like Cinderella's," Michelle said of the palatial mansion as we carried our gifts to the door and rang the bell.

"I just hope it ends as nice," Uncle Jesse muttered.

A woman in a maid's outfit opened the door. "Hi, I'm Stephanie Tanner. We've talked on the phone a couple times. This is my Uncle, Jesse Katsopolis, and my sister Michelle. Can we come in?"

The maid seemed pleased, and even relieved, to meet me. "Oh, Stephanie, come on in," she began in a voice that sounded like anyone's grandmother. "Sam, you have visitors," she called, followed by a sigh. "I would say it's rough, but I probably don't have to tell you." I nodded sadly. "I only come in three days a week; I can't do more at my age, and with my health the last year. Still, she told me how nice you are."

She explained that she'd worked for Mr. Burke – and his parents before that - for over thirty years, and had even hinted that she'd be available to be the nanny when Sam was about two or three months old. She'd seen how badly Sam's grandpa neglected his dad, only ever paying attention to work. The Burkes waved her off by saying they had a good daycare. She had no reason to doubt that at first, but did make sure baby Sam bonded with someone that first year to eighteen months, before she became too mobile.

Like Jean, she was still a friend, even though she was nowhere near a mother.

She'd been concerned about Sam, but didn't know how to help. Not only that, she didn't want to antagonize her employers. After all, from the size of the place, they were filthy rich. And, as Dad had remarked, it wasn't nearly bad enough for the police. In addition, she had no reason to doubt that the center Sam was in could do a good job. The maid told me how she helped, but of course, she didn't understand how close Sam and I really were emotionally yet - I don't think any of us did.

She told Uncle Jesse more about how things were with the parents; Michelle and I could focus our attention on Sam, once she came downstairs.

She looked down. "I just don't want you to think I've done nothing; I used to carry her around while I cleaned, if it was a weekend. I've tried to help, but as she got more mobile, it became much harder, I do have work here, after all."

"Well, don't worry, at least you held down the fort for a while," Uncle Jesse consoled her.

"That's what they said at the Alamo," the maid joked sadly. "Although, at least you're here, now, for her."

Sam walked slowly and somewhat tiredly down the large staircase till she saw me. Then, her eyes lit up like Christmas trees, and she got a huge grin on her face. She ran to see me, and I picked her up and gave her a big hug.

Sam always seemed very excited to see me. Even when I had to correct a behavior problem by making her sit in timeout or stay in from recess, she didn't scowl like she had at school originally. She was sad, and got fairly timid, but that was all.

Sam spoke excitedly about all the things she'd gotten, declaring that the maid said we were coming. I pulled our presents away as she grabbed for them. She seemed a bit uncomfortable not having control over things, but had learned that she had to act polite. "Please," she asked meekly, holding out her hands. Then, we gave her the gifts.

She was glad to add our stuff to her stash. Uncle Jesse later noted that it seemed her parents loved to give her things, but that they thought that was enough.

Having Michelle along helped immensely, because she looked around and noticed things faster than I did. While Uncle Jesse and the maid talked, Michelle tried to sound excited as Sam took us on a small tour. She instantly looked very puzzled gazing at the bare walls, though. She quickly blurted, "Sam, where are your baby pictures?"

Sam looked quite forlorn as she explained that they had no pictures.

"Well, you will when we're done." I quickly began making mental notes to return with a camera and start getting pictures for her and for us. Sam was delighted as Michelle and I pledged to get some wallet sized ones made, too. Dad decided he would try to fashion some sort of baby book.

She had plenty of things in her room; large stuffed animals, video games, even a television! She lived in a huge, stately mansion. And yet, we were her only friends.

Dad gave me his camera, and a couple days later we took a few pictures of Sam, of Sam with Michelle, and of Sam and me. She was thrilled.

Michelle – Dec. 30 – Tanners and Clothing:

We didn't dress real fancy, though we liked play dresses for school some, especially with Steph as the PA.

I was stunned, then, when I looked at Sam's wardrobe while we played in her room and Dad hung pictures, which her parents let us hang. "Sam, is this your closet."

"It's in my room."

"Okaaay. For a minute I thought it was a boy's." She didn't look at me all that funny. Little kids don't think things through much at that age, so neither of us realized it would make no sense to have a boy's closet there. "All you've got are jeans and t shirts. Wait…here's a few new dresses."

"They just make me wear those for parties," Sam said with a sneer. I figured she meant ones where, as Dad said, they wanted to "show her off," but where some of the other rich people now wouldn't let her come because of her past disruptions.

I didn't recognize the "all or nothing" approach Uncle Jesse could have, but Dad did later when we talked about it. For now, I said, "Let's go to the mall. You should get cool stuff like mine. Your parents can give my dad the money." She was excited, as much to spend time with us as anything. "And, why is your hair so short?" She wasn't sure.

Becky – Michelle's many hair styles, etc.:

Michelle always liked different styles, of course, A lot depended on who did her hair. The girls liked to make it fancier, and I did too alittle. Jese and Joey could do pony tails, and Danny would do a couple, but till hse got old enough to do it on her own, she relied on her sisters if she wanted something fancier. In the end, she often went for pony tails or just long with a clip; which she also enjoyed having her sisters do at times.

Sam, of course, hadn't had the attention paid to her. She'd liked it short at first because it got in her way otherwise. And, her parents had always bought her jeans and shirt because they were the easiest for the maid to wash.

When Michelle started to urge Sam to change, she didn't go really feminine, because Michelle wasn't. Plus, she felt like she was forced to wear the really fancy stuff. Stuff which, once she wasn't forced to go to the parties for about a year, Michelle would get her to wear near the end of second grade, as she totally changed her appearance. But, that's getting way ahead of ourselves.

For now, Michelle simply convinced Sam to start wearing her hair longer. She was old enough she could come it decently, anyway.

Stephanie: Ensuring Sam knows looks aren't everything:

While we urged her toward a less rugged look – Michelle perhaps less tactfully since she was still pretty young – we also encouraged her to see what was on the inside was what mattered. That wasn't hart to do, in a way – she could sense love was the most important thing. However, that was only possible because, not only were we trying so hard to show her that, but some foundation had been laid, which is vital.

Danny - Jan. 11, 1993 – Other Help, and Darcy Arriving:

Stephanie worked tirelessly to try and help Sam feel more confident and accepted. I knew she'd be able to accomplish it.

The maid had helped, too. Part of why Sam's verbal and other skills were as good as they were was the maid's interaction with her as a baby, when she was home. Sam saw her too little, though - she wasn't a live-in maid. As we learned later, the maid's work was what allowed Sam to bond with Stephanie as well as she did, and even that had taken a little while. I guess it's true what they say – "Remember the Alamo." The Alamo fell, but holding the fort for a while encouraged others later.

That little bit of someone giving her one-on-one attention at home, along with the numerous different – and often changing - workers helped Sam physically and emotionally. It's just that she needed a much more permanent and personal bond.

Steph met a new friend today. When the spring semester began, a girl named Darcy Powell walked up to her and Allie at lunch, and joked about the food. [530] Darcy was even more outgoing than Steph, and would later even be willing to ask boys out on her own. She was the opposite of Allie's really quiet, shy demeanor. It was still odd for her to hear about Sam's problems, but she was really supportive of Stephanie, just like Allie. She could tell Steph was really dedicated here.

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[530] The book introducing Darcy rules. More books say they met in fifth than the start of sixth, and they're quite close by the first book, only a few weeks into sixth, as if they've known each other for months. Early books say they've met at the phone booths since the first day of sixth. Meeting in summer is possible, but the "official canon story" says they met in fifth.

Unfortunately, Steph had her problem with Charles, who told her about his dad, early this month, too; I was feeling a lot better and not as overprotective as I could have been, but I still wondered why my girls couldn't stay innocent about the world.

Jesse – A difficult video:

When Steph learned about Charles, it was a real eye opener. The schools realized two things – they had to decide on whether to make the PA position permanent, and if so, how would they tell Steph and future PA's what to watch for if there was another case like Charles', and how to handle such things.

They developed a good video on her age level. It was geared more toward Middle School. But, these were very mature fourth and fifth graders who were Principal's Assistants. They could handle it.

The school sent it home with Stephanie the first of February – it took a couple weeks to make. Danny and Steph and I watched after Michelle and the boys were in bed, and we talked past her bedtime about a lot of different issues.

It made Steph sad – not as sad as Danny, I don't think – but at least she knew she was helping someone. "What you do with Sam, these kids need that level of one on one care when they're abused or neglected," I told her. "You just focus on the job you're doing with her. If there's ever another Charles, don't be afraid to tell someone."

"Okay, Uncle Jesse."

"I know it's rough. But, you know, most of the kids you deal with won't have problems like what they had on that video. In fact, you'll probably never have to worry about it again," Danny told her. He was right – she didn't.

"Still glad you became a PA?" I wondered aloud.

She smiled with great confidence. "Yeah. You're right; I can help some."

"Yeah, and more than some. You're helping turn that girl, Sam, into a wonderful young lady. It's just gonna take time. I know that's hard for you to understand at your age. But, you know what? You keep that positive attitude, that it's gonna work out okay for all these kids. 'Cause I know that's just how your mom would be."

"Thanks, Uncle Jesse." We hugged, and then she hugged Danny. "I'm going to start right now; I know those kids were just acting, but when I go to bed tonight, I'm going to just imagine positive results coming from what I saw."

"I'll be right up to say good night," Danny promised. Once she went upstairs, Danny sighed. "I guess we can't protect them from everything."

"No, but you know what? That girl has always been so happy and perky. I think she'd try to take anything and make it come out good, no matter how hard she had to work. She's got a lot of self-confidence; I see it so much in how she's striving to help Sam. If anyone can do it, she can."

Joey – Thu., Jan. 14, 1993 - Dr. Landress Really Impressed:

Dr. Landress had said earlier that he and Dr. Fuller felt we were doing a good job with Sam. Today, at Steph's checkup, he joked that Stephanie could probably run the show by herself. I thought she could pull it off, too, in a way.

He could tell, in talking with her, that it wasn't too stressful. He'd compared the PA position last year to a school project. As long as she had the support, it wouldn't be too much. She'd work there, have our support, and have plenty of free time.

This was different, of course, because she took it home; she had to think about it and plan for things outside of school. However, it still wasn't too stressful. She had so many people helping, and Sam progressed as well as could be expected.

We'd stayed with Dr. Fuller with Sam, since she saw her first and it was felt Sam needed consistency. Dr. Fuller had insisted on a much better diet, which we followed, and we took her in a couple times a year, to monitor things a little more. Sam met milestones and grew, which were the main concerns. She'd met growth targets before, but usually on the low end, the few times she was in; that is, when she got shots or was sick.

D.J. - Wed., Jan. 20 – Milestones – First Family Dinner and Sleepover:

Stephanie – and, to some extent, I - helped Sam on politeness, table manners, and many other things for months. Sam gradually followed our instructions. This meant our goal of being able to invite her for supper could be realized. We wanted her to be able to be in our home without Steph having to watch over her like a two-year-old. Of course, her having been in the Honeybees also helped.

It would be before that mid-February Presidents' Day week off, which was in its last year, and that had been our goal; Dad was already talking vacation for then. And, Steph needed a boost after her disappointment over the situation with Charles.

We were a little concerned as to how Sam would act, because not only would it be her first family meal at someone else's house, it would be her first sleepover. Then, of course, she was Stephanie's guest as much as Michelle's; they all slept in sleeping bags on their bedroom floor. So, she was with the real "mother figure" in her life, though we didn't think of it in those terms yet.

Michelle – Prayer; her sleepovers, camp not as early in book universe:

It was great to be able to have her over. I often told her she could talk to Jesus any time, like a real friend. Steph did, too. It was hard to get through to her what that loving friend was like, but we were showing her in how we acted, anyway.

She was bolder about sleepovers, since she didn't feel at home at home. But, I was like D.J., more sensitive, not the rough and ready type like Uncle Jesse. I wouldn't sleep at a friend's house or have a sleepover party till early in third grade.[531] It wasn't till after third grade I went to overnight camp by myself.[532]

Courtney invited Sam over to her house after I did; they were already becoming friends. Courtney wasn't ready to leave home, but with Sam feeling so alone, it was easier for Sam to think of going to a friend's house. She didn't accept Courtney's invitation to spend the night for a couple months, though. It was hard for her to realize

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[531] "My Super-Duper Sleepover Party," early third grade, before Mandy comes. Mandy is earlier in "Dear Michelle" books, but Michelle could have helped Cassie and her get along without the added problem of staying at one house making the other jealous. The point here is the difference between this Michelle and the tougher TV one who has them earlier.

[532] She's nine in the first camp book, "Bunk Three, Teddy and Me." Even if she says she's in fourth, she could mean going into fourth grade. Camp after an August birthday is plausible, if Danny's concerned after her concussion. "My Life Is A Three-Ring Circus" has her in camp after fourth grade, and she'd been to overnight camp a year ago. One could be only TV Universe canon, but not both. She wouldn't be nine till after fourth grade in the TV Universe. So, the first is surely Book Universe, because she stayed three weeks with only her sisters at Camp Lakota in the TV Universe. So, in the TV Universe, she'd likely spend a week alone at camp before she turned nine (during fourth grade). The one the year before "My Life Is A Three Ring Circus" could have been an overnight camp with her sisters, but that's not as likely.

kids would like her. Just like it was hard for her to see about God till we showed it. She learned, though, and trusted Christ as her Savior a few years later.

Jesse - Road still rough:

Michelle and Stephanie made me proud. I often thought of how Pam might feel.

It wasn't easy, though. Sam still had trouble staying dry; she wasn't totally potty trained for a couple months yet. Her destructiveness still led to Steph's visits at daycare over the next months, though Sam would never hurt another person again. Sam never got fwapped at school again, though Steph would do it to her real light a few times otherwise.

The road became rougher for another reason. Steph graduated elementary school in fifth grade; because of the redistricting middle schools went from 6-9th grade. Her replacement was okay, but not very good at helping Sam warm up to her.

I think that came from everyone's mistaken impression that Sam was like me, and there were no underlying problems. They might have chosen a different one otherwise. Indeed, when the best choice was a girl going into fourth grade the following year, they chose her, and she grew in the office very well, like Steph had.

I told Steph later, nobody can know what's really underneath someone like that till they open up and talk. And, Sam still hid her feelings a whole lot.

Steph provided all the love and direction she could. And, despite her frustration later, she did very well. She was helping Sam to bond with her, which was what she needed most; someone she could trust who would always be there, no matter what she did. The Honeybees were helping, so would dance, soccer, and so on, but the key was that one person she could consider to be like what a parent should be.

D.J. – Playgrounds at their school; Kimmy's midnight birthday in books:

While Steph was managing to rise to that level, Michelle was a super friend. Sam valued Michelle a lot; that's who she hung out with on the playground when she was allowed morning recess.

There were two playgrounds. Kindergarteners shared morning recess with first graders, but had their own, during lunch time, when half-day students went home. Then, they had more in the less structured afternoon. First through third grade kids shared lunch recess, while second and third graders had their own morning and afternoon periods. First graders shared afternoon recess with the all-day Kindergarten kids.

First graders joined second and third next year for the morning. Fourth and fifth graders had a different playground, though that would change next year. Soon, a playground would be built specifically for fifth graders.[533]

I helped with a bit of the dinner, and then did something special with Kimmy. Her birthday was last Saturday, and I was reminded when someone else recalled at the last minute on Friday. I threw together an activity on her birthday to start at midnight, since I'd forgotten about it because of my anniversary with Steve.[534] I told her what happened, and promised a real party. She was okay with it, as the midnight thing was unique, and at

[533] As class president in fourth, Michelle pledges to get fourth graders access to the fifth grade playground, while Stephanie implies that when she went into fourth, she graduated to the big kids' playground. Such a project for a newer school is likely, while they renovated or replaced older schools.

[534] "Birthday Blues" likely happens similarly, as Steve is still there, but the Tanners care more about Kimmy here, with so little teasing. So, someone else likely notices in time for D.J. to plan something for the wee hours of Kimmys' birthday, then a better party later.

least we'd had some fun, renting out a local sports place with some of our friends.

Becky - Fri., Jan. 22 - Sam's first family dinner:

We had a few milestones Friday night. For the first time in her life, Sam sat down with an actual family and had a dinner that consisted of people paying attention to her. Her parents had left a note saying she could, and we could bring her home after dinner and a bath, if she didn't want to stay. Of course, she was really anxious to, and did very well, so she called and said she was staying. We could have called just as easily, but it was good for her to have experience using the phone. Stephanie had worked tirelessly with her for a few months on manners and things like that, because nobody else had. Well, at least, not very much, and certainly not one on one.

She was reasonably polite; she didn't seem any worse than other five-year-olds. In fact, she seemed to want to copy Michelle totally.

D.J.:

Stephanie often used Michelle as an example. Michelle tried to include Sam in everything. She could still be quite blunt, but I'd been able to encourage her to be much more polite. I think knowing a five-year-old wasn't potty trained yet made her conscious enough on her own, though, that Sam might be a little embarrassed about some things. She'd done well in discreetly helping to complete her training, as well as teaching her things like telling time. She helped instill a love for learning in Sam.

Becky:

Sam let us give her a bath, too, but she wanted to take a bath with Michelle, just like our boys, Nicky and Alex, bathed together. We let her, although they looked like there was a couple years' difference in age, rather than them being twins.

She loved spending time with our family. Bath time was special, too, as we spoke glowingly about all the fun we'd had, while I scrubbed and scrubbed, feeling like I was in one of those Dickens books about poor street kids.

Sam didn't have many interests or activities, but we learned she'd enjoyed ballet when Steph's teacher had talked about it. And, she liked to sing, too.

Stephanie reminded me that Sam's birthday was in March, and suggested we have a party then. Unbeknownst to Sam, Michelle had already bought her a present.

Joey:

Sam was like one of those immigrants after the Iron Curtain fell. They can't fathom how wonderful and plentiful everything is, so their jaws drop to the floor, and their eyes bug out three feet…okay, that's cartoons. But, still, some Russian immigrants fainted when they entered a supermarket for the first time and saw all the selections.

Seriously, as the night wore on and bedtime approached, she seemed subdued. I wasn't really sure why, but I did try to cheer her up with that description. It helped, as she considered a real person doing that like a cartoon. We figured she was just unsure of what to do, or she was tired; and, I think both were true. But, she probably had thoughts about how different it was, too, feelings she couldn't express yet.

Sam got to sleep pretty fast, though sometime in the middle of the night she moved over next to Steph to snuggle with her. She slept soundly then. We dropped her

off the next morning, and Becky mentioned a birthday party. Sam's mom hurriedly told us when we could pick her up if we wanted to have a party late next month.

Michelle – Feb. 21 – Back from Disneyworld, learning about limit testers:

I was never a huge limit tester; I don't remember it much, though of course all kids do some. Sam was different.

We'd gotten back the previous evening. This afternoon, Aunt Becky took Steph and me over to see Sam, and to give her a couple books for beginning readers – story books with some words but mostly pictures. I was saving a stuffed bunny I'd gotten her earlier for her birthday, since I figured that was more the kind of thing you give at birthdays. Books were fun for anytime.

"I heard some pretty good reports from Hannah and Mrs. Larkin," Stephanie said once we gave her the gifts. "I'm glad you did well when you were over there."

"Of course," Sam said with confidence.

"I want you to be good like that for Steph, too," I said, trying out that puppy dog look Steph said she could see worked well with Sam.

Sam hesitated. "Well, but...she's so nice…"

Aunt Becky guessed what Sam wanted to say. "You kind of save your worst for her, don't you?" Sam nodded sheepishly.

I sensed Steph could tell she did that. "You mean you like behaving like that? Boy, that's nuts," I said, shaking my head.

Becky patted me on the head. "Well, Michelle, Sam feels safest around Stephanie, that's why she does it. You never tested a lot, but you were the same with D.J., and your dad, and the others." We could tell from Sam's look that Becky was right.

I was so grateful D.J. had never had to consider tougher punishments with me; once we left, I told Stephanie I hoped she wouldn't have to with Sam again.

"I don't like it either, Michelle. But, D.J. and I were talking, and Sam seems to have gotten more sensitive to some extent. Given my role, we think I could give just light fwaps like we said Mom talked about with a rebel like Uncle Jesse."

"But, see, either way, Michelle, it's like I told you with life back in Nebraska," Becky remarked. "I know it seems strange to you. But, Steph has to teach all those limits, and sometimes that means getting tough. But, Sam's still going to feel safest with Steph, because she can tell you sister cares the most of anyone she knows."

I wasn't thinking about her parents at that time; except that they were always busy. I just figured Aunt Becky meant anyone who took the time to care.

I thought a minute, and told them they were right. Sam did behave very poorly at times. I just felt just sad she won't listen when Steph talked with her, or even a few times when she threatened her. I couldn't imagine acting the way she did; I never defied limits like that. They agreed. I was so much better because I took after D.J..

Stephanie – Thu., Feb. 25 – Helping more at the daycare:

Things hadn't gone too badly while we were gone; we'd found Hannah as a babysitter by this time, and she was at the Larkins' a few times. She knew we'd be back, and saved her worst stuff for when we were back.

Sam's vandalism had been a problem a couple other times, including Monday; we had a long talk about it then, and how bad it was to be destructive. Today she cut the

seats of the daycare van up, and when I got there she wouldn't listen or go to timeout like I told her to, despite my threat. So, in private in the timeout room, I gave her a few light fwaps that didn't hurt. It felt so strange saying that, let alone doing it on purpose, but I just pretended I was a parent back in Nebraska decades ago. I told myself that Sam was just testing the limits, and she just pushed more than most kids.

She cried, and we cuddled afterward. We talked about how nice I'd been, and how it was mean to destroy anything; like the last time, she had to learn that physically hurting people wasn't the only thing that was really bad. But, she'd had a chance to be good, and not get that, if she'd listened. "I know Michelle's not here to give you that look," I said softly, "but you shouldn't need that to know we all feel really bad that this happened; just like your feelings hurt just now." She agreed.

She was starting to feel a bit like family, I was there for her so much. Still, it took D.J. reminding me later that Mom never had the experience - so she'd have been as lost as I was - to really keep me from wishing Mom was there.

For now, I just told her that we always believed in talking about things; and, we all wished she'd behave. We talked a while more about positive things she could do when bored, and how to control herself. We had no more problems.

I felt frustrated, and sad, but at the same time, I realized that perhaps they were right. Sam was testing me, because she knew I'd love her. That turned into an amazing milestone a while later, though I didn't know it at the time.

I also thought of how D.J. had trained me to work with a kid who was so much nicer, in Michelle. And, how I'd totally taken the reins with Sam. Here was something I was in charge of, and I couldn't believe it, in a way. I was stunned that I was acting as an adult would in trying to help Sam to be tender and loving.

It was amazing – a few short years ago, I was helping her with Michelle when she was a baby. And now? Sure, I had a great team around me, but I was making a difference. Sam saw me as the most trusted authority in her life. She felt safe with me.

Becky - Sam excited about Stephanie, Everyone happy with growth:

One thing Jean noticed at the daycare was that Sam talked about what fun she'd had with us at times. She'd noticed that Sam didn't talk about her home life like other kids did, but again, she had little time to investigate, and why should she? Sam wasn't really verbal, and she knew other kids who were rather quiet and shy. Yes, the maid and others talking to her had caused her to advance, but also remember that while she was passing developmental milestones, she was on the lower end of average.

By this time, Dr. Fuller had some clues about Sam's past, thanks to Jean, the maid, and what we'd provided. She knew Sam was bonding well with Stephanie. Her behavior was improving; every time a child does something bad doesn't mean they need help, after all. Some kids are just more rebellious.

However, it was worth monitoring in case her behavior got worse, or she showed other signs of problems. Her behavior kept getting better slowly, however, and she never vandalized anything again. She was learning to cope and following the rules quite well; only two years later would there be signs of a problem.

Danny – Sun., Feb. 28 – A birthday party for Sam:

Sam got a little loud at times, but nothing too bad, and not nearly what she would

at school before Steph started to teach her some self-control. Stephanie and Michelle performed incredible work with her. If she didn't melt under Michelle's puppy dog look, she knew from Stephanie's glare she had to be good.

Today was a really special treat. Of course, part of that was Michelle giving Sam a birthday present, a stuffed rabbit Sam named "Mr. Snuggle Bunny," which became her favorite, like Mr. Bear for Steph. The party itself, with all of our family, was incredible, too. Sam couldn't believe it was happening.

I'd made a video of her first sleepover, some other special times, and the party today. We figured on copying the best parts and giving them to her. After Sam went home, I turned the last couple minutes of the video over to Jesse.

Jesse – A message to Papouli:

Papouli's wife, Gina, was very sick. She eventually passed away this summer. We'd thought about sending a video wishing her well, but we weren't sure how to do that. Once Sam came along, we knew; we'd keep this one, but Danny knew someone at the station who made a copy to send.

I sat in an easy chair up in the attic apartment, holding Nicky and Alex as they slept and Becky recorded. "Hey, Papouli. It's Jesse. That new girl you saw, well, tomorrow's her sixth birthday. Her name's Sam. We're the only family she's got.

"Oh, she's got parents who don't pay any attention to her," I explained, not realizing how true that was. To me, it was just the fact they expected others to do everything, instead of taking the time like we did with the girls. "But, starting last fall, when Stephanie met her, she's been helping Sam with everything. Her behavior's improved, she's eating better, and her hygiene's a lot better. Stephanie makes me so proud. She really knows what it's like to be a leader.

"I hope you can come and meet her sometime. You can tell she's been through a lot from how she acts, and what we talk about, but you know something? Steph's starting to put a team together that can really help her. I know you'd be proud."

Stephanie - Sat., Mar. 6 – Love - A Milestone:

Sam hid her feelings a lot, but one very important feeling began to come out, as we talked before bedtime tonight; she was here on a sleepover.

Courtney was timid about going anywhere herself for a sleepover; remember, Courtney was in the half-day Kindergarten program. It figured she wouldn't want to go anywhere overnight. Still, Courtney stayed over at our place playing till about eight that evening before going home.

Sam and I relaxed before she and Michelle went to bed. She was thrilled; she was finally dry for good, and being here – just us helping her - was a great calming influence.

She was curled up in my lap after our family got done playing a game, and we said good night. Suddenly, she looked at me with that same look I'd seen in her the first time we had her over, and said shyly, "I love you, Stephanie."

I'd just turned eleven, and still believed all endings could be quick and happy, so I didn't shed any tears over the loss of the simplicity of youth. I'm sure Dad and the others did, though. I simply grinned broadly as I realized that my care and concern for her had grown into love. "I love you too, Sam," I said earnestly, giving her a big hug.

The enormity of the moment was lost on me at the time, given my age. Later, we

determined that it was really the first time she'd been certain that I cared about her unconditionally, no matter what she did. That, in itself, was very important in forming that parent-like bond.

I wondered if she'd ever felt like telling anyone she loved them, or if she ever heard it. The former was probably likely, as it had only taken six months for her to say it, and she'd expressed it sincerely. Then again, the latter was unlikely.

In fact, as I lay awake, I thought she might have wondered if I'd say it back, if she'd never heard it. I thought of the maid, and what she'd done. Since she wasn't a live-in maid, she wasn't there too often, but some weekends, she'd have been there enough that Sam had someone as a baby.

Still, that maid was more like most of those daycare workers who were too busy after the first year, maybe eighteen months. There's a big difference between carrying a baby and talking to her while you clean, and trying to occupy a toddler and working while giving that child your undivided attention. The former was probably easy for her, the latter very hard because she had work to do, and wasn't there a lot anyway. By the time Sam was able to talk well, she might have given the maid or a worker an occasional hug, but saying I love you and getting one back would have been quite foreign. Even the hugs would have slowed down a lot as she got older.

On the other hand, true love isn't just returning an "I love you" or knowing you'll get one back. True love is when your eight-year-old crashes a car into your kitchen, and you can still say "I love you" and honestly mean it, like my dad and the others.[535] It's not about what you can get; it's about what you can give.

That night, I lay awake in my sleeping bag and pondered. I recognized that I wasn't just interested in a return on my investment in Sam - though hearing that "I love you" was a fabulous reward. I really wanted what was best for her, and was willing to devote myself to her.

She might drive me crazy a few times over the next few years, especially when I had to baby-sit her at home, where she'd never had any rules and seemed to like it that way. But, no matter what the problem, I would always be able to sincerely say "I love you" in the end. I would realize later when I learned those terms that it really was storge. That's a motherly style love, with all the tenderness, warmth, and concern for her a family member should have had. And, it was growing.

That's when I shed a tear, thinking of how God had put this girl into my life. I thought of how I was the only one who seemed to care, and how I almost seemed to be made for such a time as this. And, it was providing me with fantastic rewards. We were so lucky to have each other. Though I thought she was asleep, I reached over, gave her a little peck on the cheek, and said, "I love you, Sam."

"I love you, too," came the sleepy, yet confident, reply.

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2. A Great Team - Mar. 1993-May, 1995:

Joey – Mar. 15 - Sam and the Honeybeess' fundraising drive:

Our family showed the unconditional love that made such bonding possible. Danny had recovered pretty much from losing Pam, but he still went overboard a little,

[535] "Honey, I Broke the House"

and really did when he thought it was really important. Like here.

Sam loved the Honeybees. She always acted nice there, because it was so fun. They kept those girls quite busy, and she got a thrill out of earning badges; by the time she left she'd broken Stephanie's record.[536] She just hadn't had much encouragement to behave from anyone but us; really from Steph first.

Danny tried to buy lots of honey from her for the Honeybees' fundraising drive, but it wasn't enough. So, what did he do? He bought her a new bike anyway, because he felt so bad for her.

"Danny," I told him before the girls got home from school today, "Is she really going to learn anything by cheating?"

"Hey, I do not cheat; I improvise," Danny point out. "Just think what that poor girl is going through; her first attempt at anything and as hard as she tries, she loses."

"Man, am I glad you had grief counseling," Jesse cracked. "Look, man, I hurt for Sam, too, all of us do. But, she gets plenty of things. You know about that mansion her folks have, it's like Richie Rich's. It's rough, but she has to learn sometimes things don't work out, and she can still feel confident about herself and the job she did."

Danny sighed. "Yeah, I guess you're right." He couldn't help but laugh. "Man, can you imagine if I stayed as much of a wreck as I was when Pam died? I'd have bought two dozen extra fish after Michelle's one died."

"Don't I know it," Jesse said.

"There's a new bike out here," Michelle and Sam squealed with glee; Sam had gotten permission to come home with Steph and Michelle on the bus.

Danny sighed as he walked out back. "You're right, there is." He knelt down to Sam's level. "I bought it, because…well, I just feel so bad because of how things have gone for you. I was going to say you won, but that would have been wrong. The truth is, people, and the time you spend together, are more important than things. You're way more special than a bike or anything else."

"So, can I keep it?" Steph praised Sam for asking her permission, and we copied.

"Maybe if she's doing real well on her sticker charts," Michelle offered.

"Michelle, little candies and things are the kinds of rewards she gets for stickers. Do you realize how many stickers she'd need for a bike?" Stephanie thought a second, and then hoisted Sam into her arms and then up to eye level. "Then again, you have been earning quite a few, haven't you?" She smiled, and hugged Stephanie. "I think we'll work something out where you can get it as a reward for good behavior. Because I see a lot of improvement in you."

"Thanks, Stephanie." We all hugged as they exchanged "I love you"s. She got the bike a couple weeks later.

Danny – May 9 – Celebrating Mothers:

I took the girls and Sam to visit Pam's grave today; we didn't feel the need anymore, but felt it was important to help Sam understand. Sam had had more problems at the daycare, but as we tried to help her talk about her frustration, those problems were winding down a little. Sadly, she still held lots of things inside.

She saw in us a wonderful family that she could feel a part of, though, if she wanted. The fact they'd said "I love you" so easily to each other shows that with Steph

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[536] Steph held the record for badges in the TV Universe, and would here, too

and her. But, you could tell it with us, too, as we talked around Pam's grave, sharing stories and reminiscing about the fun times.

"She's up there?" Sam asked, pointing to Heaven. I confirmed that the real Pam was in a perfect place with God. Her body was here because she didn't need it anymore. I felt glad I didn't have the problem of needing her to be here anymore, either. I'd gotten on with my life very well. We all missed her, but there wasn't the profound emptiness, nor would there be even when I broke up with Vicki.

"Was she just like Stephanie?"

D.J. chuckled. "Well, Steph," she said, "Michelle figured she was just like me, what do you think?"

We all told Stephanie she did a great job.

"Thanks. I don't know. I try. But, we all have parts of her. Wanting to be the best, getting really excited at things, that warm, friendly smile. And, a bunch of other things." Steph thought for a second. "I guess the most important is love, though. When I think of Mom, that's the first thing I always think of." She picked Sam up and cuddled her. "Just like I hope you always think of how much I care for you."

Michelle piped up that, "I told her on the way over you'll be in Middle School next year. Who's going to go to the daycare and stuff to help?"

"Well, she had been doing it as the PA," I said, "but now, while the new PA can handle little things, I think Stephanie's going to go there too, if need be. It just seems easier, since you know her so well, Steph."

"Right. And, you'll always be able to call us or come over." Stephanie smiled sadly. Sam knew our number and address better than hers. It would be an adjustment, but the worst of the problems outside of home were behind us with Sam.

It would still take a lot more love, tenderness, and care to make sure she turned out well, though; much more than we'd have imagined.

Becky - Thu., Jun. 3 – Steph graduates, leaves PA post:

It was a day for transitions, as the school year ended. My parents had been so proud of Steph as PA; for her birthday this year they'd sent her some pictures and a wall hanging from an old one-room schoolhouse near where I lived. Had she not had Sam to take care of, she might have handled it differently, but now, it was just a transition from Sam seeing her as the PA to what she'd become a while back – a mother.

Steph had said goodbye to the school, and walked home with Sam and Michelle; Sam had gotten permission to play at our house for a but. It was a nice transition; Steph was already more of a parent figure. Not all kids she tried to help turned out great; Aaron, for instance, had problems later, but you can't know which kids will in first grade. You just have to be confident that you gave it your best, like D.J. had.

Stephanie was relieved, in a way, because now she could devote much more energy to Sam. D.J., meanwhile, was relieved she didn't have to continue to prevent Kimmy from embarrassing herself as President; which she did one more time.

D.J. – Kimmy's Presidency Ends with Gatorade Shower:

As we cleaned out our lockers, Kimmy turned to me and said, "Well, Deej, this is it. The last day of the Gibbler Presidency." She grinned and said, "Thanks, Deej. One kid said she felt my presidency was sort of like an ink stain you can't get out. I guess I really

left a mark on this school," she spoke with all sincerity.

Not wanting to hurt her, I said, "You really did. Like the yearbook says, they were times we could never forget." I looked in her locker. "What's that?"

"It's the Gatorade bucket. I didn't tell you?" I was speechless. "I told the guys on the wrestling team I wanted this. I want to go out in style. They're waiting to pour it on me. They said after my term, I deserved to go home all soaked. Hold my bag." I took it, unsure of what to say. Before I knew it, she'd grabbed the bucket, and run to the front entrance. The principal and I looked on in shock as several pranksters dunked her.

She got to her brother's car as Steve caught up with us. "Deej, what happened?"

As I explained, the principal sighed. "I am so glad this year is over."

Steve and I rode home with Kimmy. We came in the back door, as Steph, Michelle, and Sam were having a snack. Their eyes widened, as Dad got up. "Kimmy, don't sit down in my kitchen like that! Why are you all wet? It's not raining."

"It's Gatorade."

"Trust me, Mr. Tanner, you don't want to know," Steve responded. Dad ran to get some towels from the linen closet.

"It was to celebrate the completion of her Presidency," I explained once Dad returned and Kimmy began wiping herself off.

"I thought you only got that for winning something," Michelle said.

"Why would you want to get all sticky if you won something?" Sam asked incredulously, some Michelle-like bluntness starting to come. "Are you nuts?"

"No, it's just that sometimes, Kimmy and sense are opposites," Steph said.

Kimmy admitted she was really sticky. "This wasn't my brightest idea."

"Well, the school is still standing," Dad said, trying to be positive, as we all spoke excitedly about the fun things we'd do with Sam this summer.

Jesse – Aug. 9:

Sam really was improving. Gina had passed away, but Papouli called, wanting to come over Thanksgiving to meet Sam. I hadn't thought before, but Sam not only didn't have parents emotionally, she had no grandparents. They can be very special. With tales of World War Two orphans, and from his youth, Papouli could really relate to her.

As it turned out, his visit would be of great benefit to him, too.

Joey – Aug. 18 – Steph's protectiveness; having fun:

Sam had fun growing closer to us, but you could see a bit of Steph's protective nature, too, as the summer wore on.

Having to guard Sam so much was never really stressful. Spring of seventh grade was probably the worst. A new girl moved in in March, and Steph was a bit upset since we'd learned Sam had inner problems we'll get to later. Steph got miffed when this new classmate spilled milk on a boy she liked, and kind of laughed about how the girl was kind of nerdy to relieve that stress. Her protective, mothering instinct then led her to protect the new girl, but she was really worried about Sam.[537]

This summer was much more tranquil, though. We took Michelle and Sam for

[537] "Getting Even With The Flamingoes," toned down, the joke isn't nearly as bad in the "real Tanner Book Universe." Such responsibility would make her more protective, but she wouldn't have money to go to Anthony's Pizza every day, etc.

soccer tryouts today, one of a number of things they did together this summer. They were in the same age group for one year, but then Michelle went into the 8-10 range, and was on a different team. Sam had Courtney and others and was more confident doing things without Michelle by that time, though.

Kimmy – Trying to help, providing comic relief:

I wanted to help. They didn't always want me helping, but I thought I could do some real good driving out to see them in their soccer tryouts.

I said a few things that were pretty obvious, in a way. For instance, I told Sam, "The object is the kick the ball. You do that with your feet. Don't try to kick with your hands, or people will laugh at you." I think they guessed I had experience at that.

"How good were you at soccer?" Sam asked me.

"I knew right where the ball was," I responded. "One day, I was walking around, looking at the flowers, and the coach yelled, 'Kimmy, where's the ball?' And, I pointed and said, 'Right there, Coach.'" D.J. told me not to say how old I was then.

They didn't always appreciate my help. But, at times like this, they did. I would never tease when a kid was hurt; like if they missed their mom.[538] And, I felt bad for Sam; I never said anything, since they said not to, but it sounded like her parents were asking Steph to raise her. So, I'm glad I could make her laugh, at least. And, I think they used it as a lesson on how to be nice to others, too.

Stephanie – Mon., Aug. 30 – Middle School Stress, Flamingoes:[539]

In Middle School, there were times when I'd be a little on edge, because of the increased workload and continued need to help Sam. Still, even that wouldn't be too bad. I had control of the situation, for the most part.

The only time I'd be edgier would be when I learned there were hidden fears and concerns that we hadn't caught. Partly because of Mom's death, I tended to need to know what was going on; when I could help with things, I was fine, because I knew what Sam was facing, and that there wasn't anything really awful. I knew there was no danger of that bond disappearing like when Mom died..

The Flamingoes were a headache, too. They were your garden variety "popular" girls who acted snobby, but that was all; they were far different from the mean girls in some schools, more high school than younger. Flamingoes never bullied physically, but there was some name calling and intimidation that way.

They were the kind who matured as they got older, like Kathy santoni and her sister would, though of course Kathy had to learn the hard way. Those in really mean cliques either stayed the same or got worse. I'd seen similar problems at the "popular table" in fifth grade, except boys were on these girls' minds, too.

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[538] "Slumber Party," she left, knowing Steph needed to talk to D.J.

[539] As shown, characters can be very different with a small early change. Far too many Flamingo books for all to fit, and noted similarity only between books with Flamingoes prominent (not as much the first) and a totally different high school series. So, what "really happens" to Steph is rivalry with a snobby, mostly peaceful clique; logical since they only picked on Steph to get the phone card. Unrealistic or out of character parts made realistic like in the TV Universe, if the book fits in book canon otherwise.

Unusual things, if feasible, are explained as we progress. For instance, "Here Comes the Btand New Me" - the rest can be canon for reasons you'll see. Steph's unrealistic reaction to Danny taking her to school, is just a bit of anxiety over his protectiveness, as seen at the end of this blurb.

Overall, I tended to get along well. Even that problem went down quickly. We'd become closer when I got to high school, though not really close right away.[540]

I didn't mind having Dad take me to school, though I wanted to seem grown up one day and was worried on the first day next year, that Dad would get all sentimental.

Danny:

I was better, but thanks to Pam's death I still got a bit too sentimental at times, it's true. One special instance had happened the previous evening.

Sam had spent the night so she could go to school with Michelle today, and feel encouraged, since there was a new PA. Of course, Steph handled everything, anyway, and she knew that. But, the change was still kind of tough.

Anyway, I got the cutest picture. Just like D.J. would do Steph's hair while Steph did Michelle's, now it was like that, but Michelle was doing Sam's too. She was really growing up. Soon, she'd dance as part of the opening in Steph's group's talent show piece at school. There aren't a lot of seven-year-olds who could do that.[541]

Steph really was growing up. Thankfully, D.J. was still there

D.J. - Oct. 15, 1993 - Presenting the Flamingoes:

Last night was a mother moments. I had a hunch I should look for Stephanie, after some things that had been going on lately. I found her with Dad's phone card in his office. I knew she was upset, she practically burst into tears when I caught her.

She told me all about this clique, led by Kathy Santoni's younger sister; they were trying to get Stephanie to join. I was stunned when she told me how she'd done a couple other seemingly harmless dares as tests. They were harmless, but this wasn't - Kathy's boyfriend had moved far away, and Kathy's younger sister was going to get the number so she and some other girls could use it to call their boyfriends.

I told her exactly what those Flamingoes were up to; she put the card back and there were no problems. It turned Stephanie off of them big time, and because she wouldn't do what they'd wanted, they battled her and her friends through Middle School for boys, honors, and so forth.

I'd wanted to protect Steph from Kathy and her group - I knew they'd be in the same district as Stephanie, though if the district lines had been drawn differently they wouldn't have been. I didn't even hang out with Kathy for years, till the Flamingoes and Steph stopped being rivals, out of a desire to protect my younger sister.[542]

I couldn't believe Kathy wasn't directly involved, but as I look back, maybe she wasn't. Michelle tried to get boyfriends for Steph without Steph's knowledge. Still, I held the responsibility to protect my younger sisters. Kathy still found enough help with her son Scott, and I was quite busy anyway.

Kathy was gracious and apologized later for the trouble her sister caused, too; by that point her sister was in twelfth and not as interested in such cliques.

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[540] Things improve near the end of a few "Club Stephanie" trilogies, including trips after 8th or 9th grade, as it would be with a middle school group since their school is 6-9th grade. D.J. went to Spain after 9th, and the move to high school causes some to mature, so a trip to Europe or elsewhere after 9th and them growing closer slowly is quite plausible, this being a garden variety clique.

[541] "Hip Hop Till You Drop"

[542] "Phone Call From A Flamingo" – D.J. even called Kathy a sk-nk, totally unlike TV D.J..

Stephanie – Sisters All More Mature, Don't Fly Off the Handle as Much:

I was so grateful D.J. stopped me. I would never do anything like joyriding or lots of other stuff some do. Even having Allie around would have prevented the worst of what I would have done, and that wouldn't have been really bad. However, this had seemed so innocent. It was that part of me that wanted to be popular. Even though I was a PA, I was human, too. There's a part in all of us that craves that at this age. That's the real reason I tried to get my ears pierced on my own.

D.J.'s work gave us all a lot more maturity and self-control, like with Michelle's dance we just mentioned.

We still had differences, but because of Sam and with D.J. passing the torch to me, I was determined to be more motherly and not fly off the handle like some teens.

This meant trying hard not to react when Michelle did things that some would find embarrassing,[543] patience that I worked on for quite a while, though we still had a few big ticklefests. I was always patient with Sam, but it's different when you live together. And, tickling each other like crazy was a fun, sisterly way to relieve stress when all else failed. It was a fun way to give away those smiles. Even when Michelle teased me about my dry lips, I just showed some quite embarrassing pictures of her to my crush, like I had with D.J. one time.[544]

Jesse - Fri., Oct. 22 – Smash Club, leaving the Rippers:

Kids could take dance over the summer and fall, like Steph did sometimes, and like we'd gotten Sam into. Even if it was just Steph tonight, I'd have put the Smash Club's opening off till next week, to make sure everything was perfect. But, Sam was dancing tomorrow, too. And, the combination of many things was causing me to wonder if I really had time for the Rippers anymore.

I still loved music, of course. I was thrilled about opening night next weekend. Still, I could tell this was going to take some of my time. Something that happened next month, when Papouli came, made me think about it even more. Eventually, after having discussed things with him months earlier, I took Papouli's advice. I agreed to play with the Rippers only till they found someone else, which they did next summer.

We left on good terms. I felt a lot better than I would have, because I went out on my terms. I needed someone I respected to tell me stuff; and even then, I'd only listen half the time. Seriously, Papouli was right when we talked over Thanksgiving. I could always be in music; I could even put bands together and help them. But, my life really had changed. I was pushing it too far back to be a priority.

I still loved performing. But, I didn't like all the preparation time. Being on the road wasn't as fun for me, which I learned in late May, when we booked a place. Papouli had suggested that, so I would know I really knew I wanted to leave.[545]

We played the Smash Club one last time in July, closing with "Forever." I was happy being an ex-musician. I had my own kids, a great family, and Sam, whose story

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[543] "Here Comes the Brand New Me," at the beginning of seventh grade, season 8 on TV, shows her making that pledge, and starting to succeed.

[544] "Michelle Rides Again 1," natural extension of Stephanie being more mature and not annoyed as much from "Here Comes the Brand New Me" and a few others. Teasing Michelle about her and a boy kissing is also like Steph, but pictures are more likely; she'd done it to D.J. in "Crushed."

[545] A likely result of Papouli coming earlier – you'll see what else happens with that - and talking with Jesse when Jesse has been so busy. Indeed, we don't see the band in season 7 on TV.

was the kind you really loved to cheer for with her performances.

Joey – Sat., Oct. 23, 1993 - Sam's first dance recital:

We all rooted for Sam. Steph always got so excited, but she was a little worried that Sam might get scared in front of hundreds of people.

I glanced at the list of musical numbers. "She'll be okay," I whispered confidently, pointing at the names of the girls in her first of two numbers. "She's got quite a few other girls dancing with her, after all."

There are usually lots of little ones in the songs selected for kids Sam's age. There are two constants with them. There always seems to be a kid or two looking at a neighbor the whole time and copying them a little or just standing there. And, there always seems to be at least one girl who knows exactly what she's doing.

D.J. reminded Stephanie of this, while a group of girls in poodle outfits danced to "How Much Is That Doggie in the Window?" Danny nodded and whispered, "Karen knows how to arrange the girls, who needs to go next to whom." He pointed out a couple girls who were just looking around, with another trying to encourage one to participate. Some of these girls were only five.

"She'll be great. I've helped her a lot," Michelle said confidently before those girls left and a few eight or nine year olds danced to a Disney classic.

Sam had been a little apprehensive, maybe picking up some cues from Stephanie. However, after quite a bit of work with Steph and - especially - Michelle and Courtney, she managed to become quite confident, even as she imagined all those people. Stephanie may have shown a little of that excitability she got from Pam, but she could also show lots of enthusiasm, too, which also rubbed off on Sam.

Michelle wasn't as graceful as Stephanie or D.J..[546] This bothered her sometimes, as she wanted to be just like her older sisters. By fourth grade, she knew she was better at sports than ballet. However, being able to work so much with Sam made her think she should be just as good herself with enough hard work; it had paid off in soccer, after all. Instead, we told her, she simply needed to settle for being a great teacher. She didn't mind that, since she knew she wanted to work with kids.

Stephanie:

I always knew Sam could do it, but I was just a little concerned about how she might feel in front of all those people. However, I didn't have to worry. As she and the other girls came on stage, she was clearly the shortest of the group, a bit shorter than one five-year old, but she knew what she was doing very well.

"If just one person believes in you…" the music played. It was from the musical "Snoopy," though I associated it with the Muppets. It was on a Sesame Street album we bought her. Michelle and I felt it would be perfect for Sam.

As the music continued, I could tell Sam was dancing with lots of confidence; a couple of the girls were even watching and following her. "…If three whole people, why not four; if four whole people, why not more…"

There might not have been one huge miracle, but as Dad filmed that recital, I noticed several in our family with tears in their eyes. I didn't know if I'd go as far as Michelle, who acted like a star had been born. But, Michelle was clearly that one person

[546] "Ballet Surprise"

who could believe, long enough and strong enough, in someone like Sam. I was too, though I also had to watch out for every other area of her life, as well. And someday, even Sam could believe in herself. Indeed, she was starting to today, it seemed.

Jesse – Sat., Nov. 7 - Steph's first crush:

With all this, we hadn't noticed the house on the other side of us from Kimmy's was sold, or who bought it. It was a couple with a boy in ninth grade.

This showed Steph's writing skills - greater since D.J. helped her some, too. Steph wrote something hinting about how she liked him, not knowing it would be in an area newspaper's writing contest. Steph and he each made it in; he'd written about her, too.

The family was great. Danny wasn't too worried. They wouldn't be dating, just talking across the way. He was more protective when the girls actually dated. The "interest" lasted a few months. Like all crushes, it was just physical, so they just stayed good friends. Steph wasn't as interested in dates at only eleven. [547]

If D.J. had pushed it, she might have thought an outing with the baseball team was one, but being more mothering, she didn't tease like that. In fact, she spoke up if Michelle believed Steph was serious about something she teased about.[548]

Danny - Thanksgiving, 1993 - Papouli visits, heart problem:

Steph wanted to be a good role model for Sam, certainly. But, something more was forming, I could tell. When Sam had her first Thanksgiving dinner with us, she often looked at Steph not wondering if she was doing the right thing, but with real admiration, one could really say love, in her eyes.

Papouli sat on the other side of Sam, relating stories of a poor orphan in Greece who his brother had adopted after the war. It was a very touching tale that made Sam feel really good; she wasn't the only person who had family problems.

"Was her name Annie?' she asked, having not listened to the very start.

"No," he said with a laugh, "she was not named Annie. But, she had a very sweet voice like the girl in that play, and could sing wonderfully."

"Did she become a star?" Sam asked.

"My dear, a star is not just someone who performs on a stage," Papouli informed her. He appeared to suffer from a little acid reflux then. He hid it from the others, not wanting to worry them. "A star is someone who is very special in another person's eyes. All of you are stars, because you are special to each other. Now, some may shine more brightly, but that does not make them more important. What is important is, how many hearts has that person touched. And, she has touched many hearts over the years."

"That's beautiful, Papouli." Jesse asked if he wanted any more food.

"Oh, no thank you, I feel like that turkey felt a few hours ago, stuffed to the gills. Thank you for a wonderful meal, Mr. Tanner."

Papouli had gone in to take a nap in my room, since I wasn't using it then. When he awoke, he had trouble catching his breath.

"Papouli, are you okay? Michelle?!" Stephanie hollered for Michelle to come,

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[547] "The Boy Oh Boy Next Door" – More mature by this age, she'd know Tommy Page was a "pipe dream" and consider this her first crush on a boy. We don't know how long he stays, but a different person could easily buy the house on the other side from the Gibblers' in the TV Universe.

[548] "Dear Michelle: I've Got Bunny Business"

wanting her to call 911 if she had to, and figuring she was still on that floor.

Michelle came running in from their room. “What is it, Steph?”

“I’m fine,” Papouli insisted, “I just had trouble catching my breath for an instant.”

“What were you doing in your dream, running a marathon?”

“Has this ever happened to you before?” Stephanie asked.

“Just one, two, maybe five or six times,” Papouli asserted. “I’m sure it’s nothing.”

“Well, I want a second opinion. Have Dad call the doctor’s office, Michelle. I‘ll stay right here just in case.” She didn’t think it was a problem for 911; that was for major emergencies. She was still quite concerned, though.

Late that evening, I came in the door to find D.J., Steph, and Michelle waiting up for me. “Jesse’s still at the hospital with Papouli.” I sat down, unsure of where to begin. “It’s a good thing he came now, instead of waiting a few months like he’d planned.”

“Is there a problem?” D.J. asked.

“D.J., he was out of breath from sleeping. What do you think?” Michelle asked.

“Well, it wasn’t exactly overexertion that caused his shortness of breath.” I explained the situation and condition. “He’s going to be checked out over the next day or two, but it looks like he might need a pacemaker. If he’d waited another couple months, there could have been no warning signs, and he might have died in his sleep.”

“Oh, no,” D.J. said.

Michelle asked weakly, “He’s gonna be okay, isn’t he?”

“If everything goes well, he should be fine, pumpkin,” I said, giving her a hug. “Now, it’s way past your bedtime. I’ll be up in a minute.” She went upstairs.

“We didn’t tell Sam; we didn’t want to scare her,” Stephanie informed me. I could tell even this would frighten Sam, from the way Steph looked when saying that. She’d really grown attached to Papouli in their short time together.

“That’s probably a good idea. She really seemed to bond with Papouli. Just like she has with you.”

“Well, I don’t know, Dad. I’m having talks and visits with her quite a bit, but it’s not like last year. I think she’s bonding more with Michelle.”

Becky came down. “Jesse called our apartment; glad you made it home, anyway.”

“Thanks. Steph, I’m sure she’s bonding a lot with Michelle, too. But, she needs a mother. And, you might be giving her that emotional attachment.”

Stephanie chuckled. “Come on, Dad. Me? I’m only eleven.”

“Well, think about it, Steph,” D.J. urged. “I was months younger than you when I dedicated myself to being like a mom for you two. I was only ten when I started forming that bond with Michelle, after Mom died.”

Stephanie thought for a second. “I don’t know; it’s kind of hard to imagine. I mean, a big sister, yeah. A best friend, yeah.”

Becky asked her if the age difference seemed weird to her. It did. “Steph, at her age, there’s still a huge gulf between six and eleven or twelve. I’m sure that you never felt like a mother figure to any kids as PA. Maybe some of it’s Papouli’s stories, but I really think that whatever it is, she really does look up to you.” Becky had to laugh. “Maybe calling you a mother is your dad being overly excited like he gets, though.”

“I don’t think the title matters. What matters is you’re the number one influence in her life. Just keep up the good work,” I finished before I headed upstairs.

Becky - Dec. 19 – Papouli leaving, all better:

We finally said goodbye to Papouli today. Sam really wished he could stay. “I had fun talking to you,” she said simply.

“I will try to be back, Sam. I have many friends and family back home in Greece, however. I am glad I came to see you over Thanksgiving, though,” he finished with a large grin. I could tell Sam was disappointed, but it wasn’t as hard on her as it would have been if he’d passed away. So many things were totally different from the way they might have been without that office. That pacemaker gave him several extra years; including one more visit later, before he died peacefully at home.

I know Danny’s girls were praying. Not as much as some families, but any prayer helps if it’s from the heart of a genuine believer in Christ’s saving grace in their lives.

Danny promised that Sam could come with us over spring break, when we planned to visit my parents. That excited her tremendously.

Stephanie - Sun., Dec. 26:

Sam’s parents got caught in a lie today. I bailed them out. They’d tried to impress their filthy rich friends for quite a while by promising that Sam had a nanny who would take care of the incredibly unruly behavior she‘d shown at these expensive galas.

However, this time, Sam had gone too far. It was at the mansion of a similar prominent rich person, and the fellow insisted they call Sam’s nanny and have her escorted off the premises, or her parents would be persona non grata for quite some time; just as several people had told them she would already be at any boarding school - if her parents had ever thought of sending her to one. They hadn‘t. Dad was right - she was a trophy, and they couldn‘t show her off with her somewhere far away.

Anyway, her mother called on her cell phone, and hoped I was home. I was.

I rushed around like mad trying to figure out what to wear. I mean, it was like going to a royal ball, and they had called expecting me to be there yesterday. Finally, I borrowed something of Aunt Becky’s and tightened it, and she drove me there. She convinced me I wasn’t supposed to come in really formal attire. A nanny wouldn’t be expected to show up like that, considering that she’d just been called.

When we entered, the butler was running down a laundry list of destruction and the cost required to replace each - expensive vases, Oriental rugs, exotic fish, and so on. Then, Sam stopped in her tracks, and quickly became very timid as I stepped in the door. “The look on her face upon seeing your nanny - priceless,” he remarked.

He was quite shocked at my youth; the valet thought Aunt Becky was the nanny till he recognized her from “Wake Up San Francisco.”

After a very stern lecture and a long timeout, followed by yet more tough yet loving talk, I walked Sam down to the front door.

She muttered a low “I’m sorry” to the host. He exclaimed to her parents, “You’ve found the Mozart of nannies.” He still couldn’t believe I wasn’t quite twelve.

She left with her parents anyway. Her wild play was that devastating at home, too. They never did anything about it, though. They continued to be caught up in a lifestyle that totally excluded her, and the maid had given up on trying to correct her long ago.

Soon enough, that would leave me handling even more problems. However, my inexperience meant I had problems just watching Nicky and Alex.

Danny – Tues., Dec. 28 – Vicki leaving; Nature shows among few they watch:

We watched little TV, but nature shows were very educational, so they were among the ones the kids could watch. I was a little too protective at times about how animals act in nature, but Joey – like Pam before she died – always helped by convincing me it was a good way to learn. Becky, too, remarked that it was kind of like how kids learned about such things on the farm, surrounded by animals.

I smiled broadly as Michelle and Samantha sat in front of a nature show. "Hey, pumpkin; what are you learning about now?" When she said it was about lions, I said, "Cool. I can see why kids like those animals. They roar just like those big earth movers and other trucks kids like to watch; I think anything with big noises amazes little kids because…" I chuckled. "I guess I'm interrupting a bit, huh?"

"It's okay, Mr. Tanner," Sam said. "Michelle says at least you're not cleaning everything like crazy."

"She's told you how I got after her mom died, huh?" She nodded, and I sat next to her. "It wouldn't be that bad. I might be rearranging everything instead," I joked. "I wish Vicki had been more interested in family. But, not everyone is. She did care about us; and you. But, her career came first."[549] I didn't say it, but I was glad she'd found out now. When she took the job in Chicago to pursue her dreams, I sensed she'd have to make a choice someday, and so had she.

"Michelle says you can can to God and He'll help you," Sam told me.

"You're right. That's helped me a lot. And, I think Vicki knew we had so much love, and warmth, ourselves that we didn't need her. And, I loved her enough, I let her go pursue her dreams. When you love someone, you have to let go. Even though it's very, very hard for me sometimes." I tried to lighten the mood by adding, "I was really close to staying in Michelle's preschool room with her that first day."

"That would have been nice." I don't think even Sam understood how good that would have felt to her at that age; she certainly couldn't verbalize it.

We talked for another minute or two. I could tell there was a growing bond between Michelle and Sam. It was wonderful to see.

Michelle asked what Sam watched at home. Sam shrugged. "I like nature shows. I still get kind of sleepy in the evening, though. So, I don't watch many sitcoms."

"that makes sense," I began, "with your smaller size and all the activities we've helped you get into, like the Honeybees, and dance, and soccer,a nd all your friends, you're bound to need more sleep. The great thing is, you're growing fast, and you probably don't need as much sleep now as you did a year ago." OF course, she'd begun to grow enough that, with the colder weather keeping people inside more, she didn't expend as much energy, so that also kept her from needing quite as much sleep. She'd get into some bad habits regarding television when she couldn't sleep. However, Steph took care of that early the next summer.

Fot now, they simply enjoyed being friends. "It would be fun to be a lion," Sam said. "It would be scary, though. They could attack the guys with the cameras. I'd never do that if I was a lion." Sam's conscience was developing, at least.

"Yeah. I wouldn't want to go anywhere near one. The zoo is fun enough. I bet when we get to Heaven, God lets us ride them and stuff," Michelle said. "I think I heard

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[549] ""Is It True About Stephanie," from help he's gotten earlier he'd handle any grief better. Since she is only mentioned in the first couple books, she leaves the same way as in "The Perfect Couple."

something once about all the animals being peaceful. I asked Jesus into my heart over Christmas, so I get to go there now," she explained. Sam simply nodded. She wouldn't really grasp the fact she was lost and needed to trust what Jesus did to save her for a few years yet. Michelle was young enough it was possible she didn't totally understand till she got assurance of it later; so, we never pushed that, letting the girls make their own decisions. They enjoyed Sunday School, though, so they went a fair amount.

Sam grinned. "I'm sure glad you're a person and not a lion." Michelle was, too. "It would be hard to be best friends with a lion." Michelle beamed proudly, but to her, Samantha wasn't just a friend. Even now, she was starting to see her as something of a little sister, since she helped her so much.

D.J. – Sat., Feb. 12, 1994 - Darcy picks from Big Sid's:

We were all doing each other's hair again. Michelle and Sam discussed a few things, including how Steph's friend Darcy's family had put in an outdoor swimming pool last summer. Darcy had also returned a parrot to a big area catalogue store.

"How did Darcy find that bird?" Sam wanted to know.

"She might have tried to talk to it," Michelle said. "Steph says she doesn't talk as much as Steph does, but she's a lot bolder around boys. I don't know what the big deal is about that, though." Steph and I both said she'd understand someday. "Anyway, she got a nice reward out of his catalogue. What did she get, Steph?"

Steph knew she'd told Michelle it was for the family's pool, so she teased a little. "She ordered a week at the space station." Michelle's mouth dropped, and I said Steph was just joking. "I told you Darcy was getting something for their pool; she ordered something to make cold drinks with, so everyone could enjoy it."[550]

"Oh, yeah. At least I always know where my stuff is. Even if I leave it there," she said. I encouraged her, saying she hadn't left anything behind for a few months.

Sam smiled. "You guys sure have fun. It's so nice to have sisters." I wasn't sure if she was saying that because she was thinking about what she was missing, or the fact she was starting to feel like Michelle was a sister of sorts. It was probably the latter.

Michelle wasn't thiking as abstractly quite yet, but even she thought that a little bit. "Even if you're just a friend, you're still like one. Just like Uncle Jesse and Joey are like brothers. We love to to have fun together."

"There's Dad with the video camera," I remarked. Sam smiled for it, Steph and michelle smply chuckled. "Trying to figure out how long a line we can make, Dad?"

"One time," Michelle told Sam, "Dad recorded D.J., Steph and I doing this, with me doing a doll like you're doing. And, he thought it would be clever to try to form a line around the world, with everyone doing everyone else's hair."

"He was told the show's budget didn't have enough money for it," Steph said.

"Believe it or not, Sam, Steph's serious." Dad did have ideas he thought were so cool and so much fun sometimes.

"Everyone would have really cool hair when they were done," Michelle said

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[550] "Joey's Funny Valentine," it's very likely a few TV things happen to non-Tanners in books, this being an easy one. We learn Darcy has a pool in "Back To School Cool," and may have over a year before that book takes place. As noted, Steph would joke around some with Michelle, and D.J., like a mom, would assure Michelle she was teasing, like in "Dear Michelle, I've Got Bunny Business." At this age kids can be a bit forgetful, but as noted, she'd still be a lot more mature than at the same age in the TV Universe, so she never thinks her bike is stolen or anything.

excitedly, talking about the lovely braids Sam was getting. Sam still preferred long, flowing hair, but at times she liked getting fancied up. She wouldn't do that regularly, though, for another year or so; but, again, that's getting ahead of ourselves.

"It's fun to get your hand-me-downs, too, Michelle," Sam said. She didn't get a lot, but she got some. "Maybe that's why you had trouble with Nicky and Alex. Girls could spend all day getting their hair done," Sam said. Mmichelle laughed, figuring she was right. And, it was fun to spend time like this with my sisters. I was so glad I've been proactive. And, Steph was learning to follow my lead with me than just Sam.

Jesse - Wed., Feb. 23 - Stephanie babysitting:

We weren't sure if Steph could baby-sit the twins by herself, but we let her try, anyway. [551] Steph had babysat Michelle by herself, usually for an hour, sometimes a couple. She'd also watched Nicky and Alex for a short time once with Michelle's help, though that was near enough to the twins' bedtime that all they had to do was execute a bedtime routine. She'd done that very well with us in the house at times. [552]

However, even that had been difficult because she mixed up their pajamas, which led to us wondering if she could watch them by herself. Still, we let her try.

The first few times were really rough - having a well-behaved seven-year-old helping was crucial the one time both of them watched the boys, as she and Michelle could each catch one, and it was that simple routine. Staying home to watch that same schoolgirl was also fairly simple for an hour or so at a time.

However, watching a couple two-year-olds was nerve-wracking, especially when one disappeared. Everything worked out well in the end, though, and the final few weeks she did well. It's just that at that time in the afternoon, it isn't just executing a routine. The point of watching them is keeping them entertained and out of danger.

She would have even called Michelle for help, but for the fact Michelle loved her Honeybee club, and they met close enough to Sam's club that it aided Sam a lot. Of course, by this time Sam was making a few more friends.

Joey: Apr. 16 – End of Spring Break:

It was early morning, and we were filing into the plane to come back from Nebraska. "Can I sit by you?" Sam asked.

"Sure." I gave her the window seat. I could easily look over her to see the takeoff, anyway. As we settled in, I remarked, "That was a great trip, huh? So relaxing and fun." It was still a year before I'd meet my future wife, and I was just having fun being silly and acting like a kid. That's what Sam was most comfortable with, anyway.

"Yeah. You're funny." I thanked her as we took off. A while later, as we climbed above the clouds, she exclaimed, "Look, it's like we're riding on ice cream!"

"It sure is. I wish I could go down and get some for us, but then the cabin would lose pressure and we'd all have to put oxygen masks on," I noted.

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[551] "Twin Troubles." This doesn't conflict with "The Perfect Couple." Stephanie is twelve, so older than in "The Perfect Couple," but there is a big difference between one simple routine and watching them alone, in the daytime, when they can get into lots of mischief. Michelle would know to be on her best behavior to help Stephanie on TV and in the Book Universe version of that episode.

[552] "The Perfect Couple" - when she's still eleven, a team effort and not the same as in the book "Twin Troubles," though it's possible that Kimmy is downstairs being lazy in the TV and/or Book Universe version of that episode, and Steph earns all the money like in "Five's A Crowd"

"That‘s okay. You can stay here and figure out how to do a cow."

"I know, there have been cartoon horses, pigs, bears, mice, cats, dogs, everything but cows. I guess nobody else could ever figure out how to do a cow's voice, either."

She laughed at my comical way of looking at the world. She couldn't verbalize it, but there was just nobody who talked cartoons like I did; maybe nobody on the planet.

Thanks to Stephanie and Michelle, Sam was very well behaved on our trip; she loved running around and playing the whole time. It was a good thing, too - Steph had told her about some of the chores she could make her do if needed, like cleaning the stalls. She'd added, "I know I won't have to enforce anything like that, right?" Sam had quickly agreed, she was starting to know just where her limits were.

Steph was very loving, tender, and compassionate, but could be quite loud and strict when she had to be. I felt Sam needed someone who wasn't too blunt like Michelle could be at times, and who didn't enforce every rule, though I realized why Stephanie did. Sam was still getting used to rules being consistent and for her benefit. She was used to Stephanie‘s, but they had to be strict at times, and Steph still had the battle of Sam‘s house to win, since Sam had never had rules there.

Another thing that helped me with Sam was that I was always into funny kid stuff, like when I'd offered to take Steph to her mother-daughter slumber party, though D.J. took her. My taking her wouldn't have worked well, of course. Anyway, Sam and I had loads of fun just playing hide and seek and other cool games at Becky's parents‘.

Becky's parents had, of course, met me at the wedding, and from all they'd heard they easily accepted me. Of course, a few people in their family guessed I was mentally challenged because I enjoyed all that; but that wasn't a putdown to me, becuase I knew they accepted me. The others knew I wasn't challenged.

The important thing is, they really enjoyed Sam, and she enjoyed being there; she liked the idea of living out in the country like that.

Michelle – Sun., May 8 – Another special Mother's Day:

Last year was too hectic. Sam and Steph had just realized a family type of bond a couple months earlier, anyway. However, as we talked the week before about the special card I'd made for D.J. when I was four – with Steph's help – I realized Sam ought to do one for Steph. After all, she'd never had the chance to make one.

When they did make things in Kindergarten for moms, she spent that time with Steph so she wouldn't feel lonely. This year, I'd encouraged her to make a little card for Steph's birthday, and now that Mother's Day was here, we worked on a really nice card. She didn't know what to say, so I helped a little with that.

We worked over at Courtney's on Saturday; Steph thought it was something I was doing for D.J.. Anyway, Sam spent the night there, and came over early Sunday, before church. We got the video camera and huddled together in the living room.

As Steph opened it, tears began to flow. It didn't say much, I had to help her with the letters, in fact, as she was still having trouble catching up in reading and writing. The thought was what counted, though.

As Stephanie and she embraced tenderly, Sam said, "I know you're not a mother, but…" She was struggling to find the words herself. "Well, thanks for always being there for me and taking care of me."

Steph insisted on giving me a big hug next. "You remember when we did this for

D.J., huh?" she asked, still a little choked up. It was weird to see her speechless.

"I knew you'd be thrilled, Steph," I said warmly

"You're special to all of us, Steph," Dad remarked. "When I think of how much like your mom each of you girls are…" He, too, was having trouble keeping tears back.

"I love you, Stephanie," Sam said sincerely. I couldn't understand it at the time. But, that was a great sign of how close she was becoming to each of us. I think she really wanted to find a way to show her love, but kids don't know how unless you show them.

Becky – May 13 - Nicky and Alex Better Behaved; Going to the Concert:

The boys were wilder at one, of course, than Michelle had been. I forget what it was for, but Jesse gave them their first timeout last June.[553] Thanks to the girls' watching, and teaching, they had better self control than they might have had.

Of course, at two nobody has great self control. You have to watch them all the time. For instance, they loved to take things out of pockets and drawers, like some kids do, because it fascinates them to find hidden stuff inside something. I think it's because something called "object permanence" is still an amazing new concept; that means something can still be there even though it's hidden.

Anyway, Jesse was fixing something that was stuck in the girls' room, and had concert tickets in his pocket. Steph reminded him the boys might be around. As usual, he was a bit careless. Stephanie saw them out of the corner of her eye, though, as they were feeling around in the jacket, and hollered "freeze" – they listened. She was very used to them after the earlier babysitting problems. So, they didn't take the tickets, and we all went to see Little Richard in concert. We loved it.[554]

This was a great example of how it's so important to keep an eye on things; you can't all the time, but most you can. Sam had improved a lot, but with how lazy her parents had been in doing that, Steph would soon have her work cut out for her. They were going to call her to watch Sam.

Jesse - Fri., June 10:

Sam liked all of us, of course. I just never got as involved with trying to help her, because I really didn't know how to handle her, except that someone had to lay down the law in a loving way. Steph was great at that.

These next two weeks would be her most challenging, though. The building that housed the daycare was undergoing renovation, and so parents couldn't take their kids there for two weeks. All of a sudden, Sam's parents needed a babysitter.

They immediately called Stephanie. Steph had just come in all excited about this outfit she'd seen at the mall - which Darcy was wearing. She'd bought it so Steph could have one just like it when she bought it. Dad mentioned babysitting as a way to earn the money to buy that outfit, and all of a sudden the phone rang.

Steph was uneasy enough about what could result from watching Sam. When she came downstairs and announced she had a babysitting job, Michelle said she had the

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[553] He'd still not want to be his own dad, and likely have to be pushed, like in "Tough Love," but it would be a different situation that leads to their first timeout.

[554] "Too Little Richard, Too Late" – he still got these tickets. A few things have to happen for them to tear up the tickets; even the drawer sticking, though. Jesse would still be a bit careless, but the younger girls will be just different enough that one of them would be watching. Likely, it's Steph, because she's used to babysitting by this time. Of course, they could have been caught before tearing, too.

wrong face - she expected Steph to be happier.

Understand that Steph hadn't babysat for anyone outside the family before. She was only twelve, and she was being asked to tame a kid who thought she could do whatever she wanted at home, and had always been able to do so. It didn't matter how much of a bond there was, there would be some hesitation on Sam's part, till Stephanie lovingly enforced some rules.

Stephanie wouldn't back down, despite her concerns. Not only did she really want that outfit, but more importantly, she knew Sam needed her. She took D.J. the first time, from four to seven in the afternoon, and Allie and Darcy Thursday.

She'd already made plans to go to a Giants game Tuesday. D.J. would go with Kimmy then, and Steph worried Kimmy might run out of there screaming. Either that, or get tricked - that's why D.J. went with her. D.J. had had to go help untie Kimmy once a couple years ago when she babysat a couple wild kids.

D.J. - Mon. June 13 – Stephanie baby-sits Sam:

Michelle couldn't stand to see anyone hurt, especially Sam, and pleaded with Stephanie, telling her she knew Sam would behave. Steph hated thinking of hurting anyone, too, so would just give a series of light fwaps like I'd suggested, and like she'd done last time, if need be. I loved how tender and compassionate my sisters were.

Stephanie and I had to corral Sam as she tried to leave, and our charge caused lots of other problems. Michelle's idea worked, though. Sam responded to calls to go to timeout by riding a messy bike in the house and causing all sorts of mayhem.

Sam was going through the classic "Terrible Twos" battle between independence and following Mommy and Daddy, or whoever is like one. She was desperate for freedom from rules, yet also wanted to listen to Stephanie and have her enforce things. Eventually, Sam threatened to do something mean if Steph didn't give in; Sam didn't mean it, but had just blurted what she felt.

Steph wouldn't accept being threatened – really blackmailed. She took Sam aside and raised her hand only slightly, giving a series of very light fwaps. Sam bawled, but only with hurt feelings. She had learned to show that sensitive inside, anyway, even if this one last time, she was trying hard to hide behind a rough exterior.

Sam listened very well after that; she couldn't believe how tender and merciful Steph was as she hugged Sam after Steph did that to her. She'd come to figure that's how it had been with the other times Steph did it; very light, with the only thing hurt being her feelings. And, it had been, pretty much. Sam was learning about unconditional love, the kind we always showed, and which she needed so much. Of course, we knew everyone did, but especially her, we learned later.

The next night, with Kimmy there to help me, was even trickier. I almost wished I'd brought Michelle, but she was going to the game with Dad and Steph. Sam wasn't too bad, though. She knew I'd borrowed Uncle Jesse's cell phone and could easily call Steph at the game, which helped a lot. However, more importantly, I think she really wanted to behave; she was just so torn after having had so much freedom.

She'd begun to realize she could never get past Stephanie's rules. By the end of those two weeks, Steph had gotten her interested in reading, with Michelle's help, and had really begun to build a bigger bond with her. When Allie and Darcy came, Darcy even taught her to cook, and she wound up earning her cooking badge in the Honeybees

the following Tuesday.

Danny – Sam's changed attitude:

Sam's behavior at home was the only major issue by this time; or so we thought. There were little things that needed cleared up over the next few months. The biggest was that Sam had acquired a slight problem with foul language, but it wasn't too bad. As mentioned before, that was because she didn't need as much sleep and was bored in the middle of the night, so she'd watched some TV then. Steph never had to threaten to make her lick soap or anything, though. Sam listened well when corrected, and after some work, she never swore like that again..

Her parents finally let Stephanie try to give her a consistent bedtime, though her only real enforcement power was to call and make sure she was home at a certain time, and deny other privileges if needed. However, her attitude had changed drastically.

Stephanie – Awesome Pirivilege in Books and Why:

Because I'd been so responsible in helping Sam, she was starting to be very willing to obey me when it came to things like the above. Even in school last year, she'd had problems, but no big ones. Some kids tried to blame her for stuff they did, but she never got in huge trouble for it, because everyone could tell there had been something of a change. And, usually those kids were pretty bad at fudging things. Their stories were very inconsistent yet when fibbing at that age.

The best part of that summer, aside from Sam's improvement, wasn't the outfit, though. I got a privilege most kids my age would never get, because I was so responsible. Dad let me use his charge card at certain stores![555]

The limit was small, and discussed each time I went, as Dad wanted to make sure I didn't go overboard; I was only twelve. But, he was rewarding me for everything I'd done to help Sam. The last major hurdle seemed to have been crossed, after all.

However, I couldn't do it all myself. She'd had a wonderful recital, and she loved soccer. Still, we had other hurdles to leap over to provide emotional stability for Sam.

Becky - Jul. 4, 1994: On Choosing a PA:

The fact Sam bonded rather quickly with Stephanie proved that Sam hadn't been totally ignored, not like some of those foreign babies you hear about who are in a crowded place where nobody pays attention to them. They can have severe attachment problems; Sam's were not quite that bad.

However, they were bad enough to make the school realize they needed to pick a PA with more compassion. The one who succeeded Stephanie first was a lot tougher on the rowdy kids, and while she wasn't as tough on Sam as she would be on older bad kids, she still didn't know how to develop a loving bond like Sam needed.

Now, however, the school felt a nurturer was needed, more than anything. To everyone's surprise, they picked a girl just going into fourth grade, not fifth. Missy was the best girl for the job, though, and she, Mandy, and Kiersten after her would all really assist Sam in making it through grade school with greatly increased confidence.

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[555] "Here Comes the Brand New Me" - Not many kids of twelve would be free to use their parents' credit cards. However, having worked diligently with a girl like Sam easily explains why Danny believes she's earned that sort of privilege in that book.

The school did it this way. Each third and fourth grade teacher named a girl or two who they thought exhibited the following: 1. Great leadership skills; 2. Problem solving ability without getting into petty bickering or cliques; 3. Humility, not obsessed with popularity, though a few little problems like when Steph got her ears pierced were okay, the girls were human; 4. Emotional stability to handle very difficult cases; and, 5. Adeptness at things like peer mediation. They also needed good grades, so their academic performance wouldn't suffer too much. A good family background was also essential – such a girl would need lots of support.

The top candidate and her family were told she'd been selected. They'd discuss whether she wanted the post. Other candidates were informed that they were alternates, to be used if one was absent. In Missy's case, she was the most qualified. A nine-year-old would be very rare in that position, but she grew into it very well.

Danny – July 7 – Comical mistake – Stephanie called an "aunt":[556]

Stephanie had carried herself so well in caring for Sam, she was considered more mature by everyone. She was also nearly the same size as D.J.; hence a funny event happened when a new daycare worker at Sam's daycare saw her with Nicky and Alex in the park today, as Stephanie pushed them on the swings.

This worker knew Steph had an older sister, and figured Steph was 16 or 17, with an older sister in her early twenties. She knew Steph was caring for Sam, too, so it was logical, in her mind, to call out to Stephanie. "Your nephews look so cute."

"Actually, they're not…"

"You're being so good for your Aunt Stephanie," the lady said, ignoring Steph's protests. She talked another minute after introducing herself, and complimented Steph for how she'd heard Sam had improved over the last couple years.

The twins didn't know any better; since they'd heard it, they started calling her Aunt Stephanie. I had to laugh when I heard it the first time. It became a family joke to call her an aunt, or call them nephews.

Jesse – Aug. 18 – D.J. Playing Sports Again:

It had been so long, it seemed, since our little D.J. played soccer. She'd grown up so fast, and to my amazement, I was reminiscing about those good old days.

Then, she startled me. She was swinging a tennis racket and bouncing balls back and forth with Michelle and Sam.

"Deej, what is this, you like a boy on the tennis team?" I inquired.

"No, that's not as big right now." She told Michelle and Sam to throw the ball back and forth, and took a break. "I need a break from that, since Nelson and I are just good friends now.[557] Something different."

"Are you trying out for the team like you said yesterday?" Michelle asked.

"Yep. It won't be to become a pro or anything. But, I've been a mother figure for

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[556] A few books call them nephews. Anyone knows it's impossible for them to be her nephews. This is a very plausible explanation for why they're call nephews; one even has her called Aunt Stephanie, so it makes sense. At age two, the twins would repeat it till it becomes a family joke.

[557] Chances are good she meets Nelson someplace like the beach. It can't be school - he goes to a private one. She wouldn't go with Viper in this timeline; she'd want someone cleaner cut. But, she would keep a good friendship with Nelson. And, with how Jesse helped bands, and Kimmy being at the Smash Club, Kimmy and Viper make a logical match.

so long, it's time to do my own thing. Ninth grade, I still had to be there for my sisters," she said, turning to me. "Of course, part of tenth was with Kimmy's presidency. By eleventh, I felt it a little, but I was going with Steve then, and there were other things." She didn't mention those things, but one was certainly guiding the younger girls with Sam. "Now, though, I feel like I can pass things on to Steph."

"Hey, I'm proud of you, Deej. That's a fall sport?" She nodded. "Anything you're gonna do in the spring?"

D.J. shrugged. "I don't know yet; maybe. I'm not in as great a shape as when I was in grade school, though." She shook her head. "Why do we focus so much on looks and things in our teens; I don't get it?"

I couldn't answer totally, but I knew one thing. "Everyone has their own talent level, Deej. Lots of kids, I think they feel it's not worth the effort after a certain point. Take music, for instance. Lots of kids form bands, like you did with the Bracelets. Pretty soon, you learned you weren't gonna be the next Beach Boys, and you quit. Me, I had more talent. I never wanted to go through life saying, 'what if…?'"

"You're right, Uncle Jesse. That's a good parallel. I think Steph could play sports up to the high school level, and maybe beyond. But, she's busy with lots of stuff." She smiled at Sam. "I guess she takes after me."

I put a hand on her shoulder. "You've done a great job, Deej."

Joey – Stephanie not dancing anymore:

As D.J. was beginning one fun pastime, Stephanie was realizing she was too busy for one that was still fun, but not a priority anymore.

She'd always enjoyed dancing. She'd had time last year while helping Sam; and, if she'd been in a different school, even without Sam she would have been helping someone, knowing her. Her interests were just changing.

Steph took after D.J. a lot. She'd helped with the sixth grade carnival and school talent show earlier.[558] Plus, she was determined to be more grown up, and pressured herself a lot to do that, though she soon realized she had to let it come naturally, and she did.[559] She planned to devote more time to the school paper. D.J.'s work with Michelle caused Allie, Darcy, and her to ponder a babysitting business someday, too.

Steph and I talked wistfully about retiring her tutu. Kimmy piping in, "What's a 22?" That was one of those times Kimmy made a joke to make people think she was joking when she sounded dumb. At least, I hoped that's what it was.[560]

Jesse – Thr., Aug. 25 - Still putting bands together:

I'd commented a couple times about my retirement on the air, and said I had put a few bands together in the past. I never really expected anyone to call and ask how to do that, but toward the end of August, someone did.

His name was Viper. We had a little segment where we talked about new bands on Thursdays, at times, and of course Joey came up with the goofiest names. He once

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[558] "Twin Troubles" and "Hip Hop Till You Drop"

[559] "Here Comes the Brand New Me" – Moving in with Allie for a few days to write an article is likely not canon – going there for an afternoon may be - but pushing herself to be more grown up and follow D.J.'s standard would be, even without Sam; with Sam, she'd feel even more of a desire.

[560] D.J. hopes she's joking when Kimmy asks what time the six o'clock news is on in "One Last Kiss," so Kimmy has likely joked like that before. Very plausible as a way to hide when she doesn't understnad.

suggested Perforated Anemics. He argued that it would stand out because it would be the weakest thing possible; something that was weak enough to be called anemic, then was perforated on top of that.

Viper didn't go for that – thankfully – when he called and was interested in maybe getting a group together. He'd been with a polka band when little, though, and had the drive to try to do something in rock and roll. His group chose Monkey Puppets as a name. They rented out the "Smash Club" to practice, and seemed a lot like some of my first bands. I only helped a couple groups like this, but it was fun.

They were never at our place, since I had the club for bands to use now, and D.J. preferred the more clean cut guys, anyway. Kimmy was a different story, though.

Michelle – Thu.., Sept. 1 – Victor, the Russian Student:

We were all so excited in our school. Our whole area has a lot of people from other countries, but guess what? Today, I met a student I'd heard about a couple times since the year started; his name was Victor, and his family was from Russia.[561]

You know those families Joey talked about, where they come here and they're so shocked by all the choices? Well, Victor's dad didn't faint or anything when they finally got approval to immigrate a couple months ago, but they have been really amazed.

I introduced Sam to him; she asked if his eyes bugged out when he saw the U.S., but he couldn't understand well. He and his family were in classes to learn English. We eventually helped him to understand the joke, but it took a while to have any really long conversations with him. Still, it was fun to know someone from so far away.

D.J. – Mon, Sept. 12 – D.J. Makes the Tennis Team:

I burst in the door, skipping merrily and shouting, "I made the tennis team!"[562] I'd play this year, and enjoyed intramural tennis in college, too, though I was too focused on volunteering to play on the college team against other schools.[563]

"All right!" Dad proclaimed. "I always knew I called you my little tennis ball head for something besides you being bald at birth."[564]

Even Dad's corniest jokes couldn't deter me. "Dad, please don't ever tell the team you called me that," I said with a grin. "Where is everyone?"

"I don't know. I guess you can just go grab a bite to eat in the kitchen."

I walked in, not suspecting a thing, and saw everyone there with a big cake. "Surprise," they all yelled.

"Here, I even let you have the first piece. Of course, Uncle Jesse let me lick all the batter," Michelle joked. "You deserve it."

"Thanks. You've really inspired me, too," I told her.

I didn't win any awards. But, I finished with a good season, and most importantly,

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[561] Even if Michelle's in a different class in the first four Michelle books than in "Dear Michelle" books, as noted, there are at least three of each class in the school. So, the Russian family who speaks almost no English and moves there still exists, even if he's not in her class.

[562] "The Fastest Turtle In The West" – Michelle recalls both D.J.'s and Steph's coaches. Steph's she'd remember from a few years ago, but it sounds like she remembers coaches her sisters played for, so D.J. had to play something. As noted here, this is a very likely sport.

[563] Several books have her taking tennis lessons or playing, just as Michelle is on the all-star team in soccer, but D.J. having more fun since she gave of herself more earlier also plays a part.

[564] "Happy Birthday Babies 1"

had lots of fun. It had helped take my mind off of guys, and the stresses of thinking about college. I played singles and doubles.

Our coach told me some play because they want to turn pro, some just want to try it out, but the most important part of any sport is that you need to have fun. Otherwise, it's just work. Excited, happy cheering was always a big part of our games.

Kimmy also tried out for the tennis team, but she wasn't very good. She was used as a scorekeeper, though, just so we could do something together.

By the winter and spring, Kimmy and I tried volleyball, but weren't as interested in that. I didn't necessarily like a game where I dove around all the time; that's why I'd liked soccer so much. We'd also gotten Sam into that.

Stephanie – Sam playing soccer:

This was Sam's second year of soccer. She'd started out running and not doing much, but most girls her age do that. This year, her athleticism started to develop.

By next year, she'd be really good, and come back from a tonsillectomy to win playoff MVP, as her team won the league title. Her ballet led to increased athleticism in other areas, too, though she'd always be too short to really do well at softball or other sports. In between this year and next would be struggles, though.

Becky - Michelle, sports, and Sam:

Michelle was into softball because she took after Steph and her baseball. She enjoyed soccer, too, though.

Playing with Sam also helped Michelle improve her play quite a bit, too. So, did playing with her Russian friend.[565] She promised to teach him baseball, too, but for now, soccer was a very easy game for them to understand. She played soccer in the fall of '95, and appeared in an all-star game, her only local all-star game appearance. Michelle didn't make the traveling team.[566] In Michelle's fifth grade year, she didn't play much, as she was into horses and softball, plus a little cheerleading, and Danny was careful with all the girls to avoid overscheduling.

Kimmy – Oct. 21 – Instead of the donkey – I scream for ice cream:

Michelle sold a bunch of lemonade, thanks to me. Her dad sent us out to the candy store and said, "Keep an eye on her, just to make sure she's okay."

"Don't worry, Dad, I'll watch Kimmy," Michelle joked. She knew I could make very strange choices, given the right circumstances.[567]

She'd made lots more than her dad expected. When Stephanie got home, she saw several huge coolers of ice cream that had just been dropped off by a delivery truck. She naturally assumed that I had something to do with it. She was right.

After Michelle spent maybe $80 in the candy store, I said a donkey would be fun. She said I was nuts. So, I said to spend the rest on one of her favorites – ice cream.

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[565] Victor; in "Dear Michelle" books & thus in one of the classes in Michelle's grade

[566] "My Almost Perfect Plan" is TV Universe due to scheduling and calendar issues. She had to play a lot to be good enough to make it. She'd be too overscheduled with horses, possibly softball, and especially a class presidency to have played enough. A game is likely, though, during the season. It's possible she doesn't play soccer in books, but there's no reason to think she doesn't play at all.

[567] "You Pet It, You Bought It," they may not even see it, but Michelle's more intelligent and has few odd ideas in books anyway, so they won't buy the donkey. Kimmy, however, is still Kimmy.

Michelle hosted the biggest ice cream social you could imagine after school Monday. She could have saved a little money, too, but her dad said the memories we create now were the most important things. Sam had lots of fun, and so did her whole class. “Now this is living,” Sam said excitedly.

Danny – Celebrating life, Show on immigrants:

There were plenty of times after Pam died that I was very thankful to have spent many spare moments celebrating life with my family. That’s just what Michelle did. So, I didn’t complain, though we had a talk about how next time, it would be good to save some, too. At least Michelle spent it helping others while having fun.

Despite the flu, they hadn’t merged classes last week as they discussed. Michelle helped Joey calm a class down for a few minutes. Her class did special international stuff. This was partly because of Columbus Day, but also because Victor and his family were in the school district. They learned all about immigrants. Becky and I had a show about that, too. We waited till Victor’s family could talk a little more, but still talked to them, as well as other are immigrants, during a show soon before Thanksgiving.

D.J. – Visiting Granny Tanner, and Michelle’s Advice:[568]

Michelle had a very close bond with Granny Tanner in Connecticut, so while she’d been out to San Francisco several times since retiring and moving to San Francisco for a couple years, we traveled there for a change. Because a few kids went to her for help because she was so helpful – Sam sent a few, but more were from the school paper’s advice column that any age kid could put question in at – she was able to help another kid with advice whose family was travelling.

It was so much fun to see all the snow. Steph had made her Christmas present, which she loved. I’d taught her, and now we were working with Michelle and Sam on sewing projects; our mom was often too busy and excited to have the patience to sit and sew, but Steph did. And, Mom had managed to do some, and teach me, anyway. She’d even taught Uncle Jesse, though he fought the idea at first, probably till she convinced him only he would want to sew one of those messy leather jackets he’d wear as a teen.

Becky – Tues., Jan. 3, 1995 – Kimmy and Viper Break Up:

Kimmy entered the house looking a little dejected, this evening. “Bad news, Deej,” she said. “Viper and I broke up.”

I’d just come from putting the boys to bed, and offered my condolences with D.J.. “Well, you had some good times together. You’ll find the right one someday,” I consoled her. I knew even Kimmy could find a perfect match somewhere.

“Thanks,” Kimmy said. “It was so much fun. I was the head groupie. I even started the fan club. I never did get to design a t-shirt, though. Anyway, he told me he needed more space,” she explained. “And, he couldn’t come back, since my feet stink.”

“Well, he’s just like our Uncle Jesse was; he loves a life of freedom right now,” D.J. told her. “But, Aunt Becky’s right; you’ll find someone.”

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[568] “Dear Michelle: How Will Santa Find Me” – As noted, a few questions are likely from younger kids, with anyone able to put a query in the box. Nothing in the book prevents Sam from being there, but she could just as easily travel with the Larkins. Because of the attachment, it’s presumed Granny Tanner has visited since they met Sam.

"Yeah. It's such a shame, though. It was so cool to have a boyfriend with the same name as a science fiction spaceship," she said, referring to the original Battlestar Galactica. "I don't know when that chance will ever come again."

D.J. ignored the fact Viper called himself that because of the snake; Kimmy had said that to try to sound smart. D.J. just smiled and said, "Well, if I meet any boys who call themselves 'Millennium Falcon,' I'll send them your way."

"Thanks, Deej; you're the best," Kimmy said tenderly.

I continued with the "Star Wars" theme by warning, "One bit of advice, though. Whatever you do, never date a guy who goes by the name of 'Death Star.'"

"Sounds like good advice; thanks," Kimmy said before she and D.J. went up to D.J.'s room to talk further about it. She met Duane the following month.

Danny - Jan. 25 – Book Michelle's compassion, asked to help another:

Michelle was always very compassionate. She made me so proud. Steph wrote a newspaper article from the meatloaf's point of view last fall about the taunting and abuse students gave cafeteria food, especially that one. She was so touched when Steph read it she broke into tears.[569] She'd learned in those "teachable moments" from D.J. how important it was to communicate – though she was blunt at times – and show her feelings. She was so mature, and responsible, I let her walk Comet by herself in the spring. She was big enough to have that privilege.[570]

It wasn't odd, then, when a new girl was placed with her as the new semester began. The girl, Mandy, was from New Jersey. The teacher assigned Michelle to help her. She felt Michelle was the best girl for the job; which she probably was. She has always had that special gift.

Michelle had known Cassie since the first day of Kindergarten. Cassie got jealous, that Michelle spent so much time with Mandy. Michelle struggled with how to help both feel wanted, until time bathing Nicky and Alex for Jesse and Becky helped her realize it didn't have to be a competition. Each girl could like her the same.

Michelle helped both co-operate, and didn't need our help to do it, except I reminded her how close Jesse and Joey had become as my friends.[571]

However, she was Steph's eyes and ears, so to speak, for monitoring Sam. She could sense little things about Sam others couldn't at times. Missy, the PA, was good, but only in fourth grade so still learning. Sam wouldn't always confide in her.

Jesse – No Easy Solution:

Michelle always did as she was told, and loved to help. I might have rebelled in

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[569] "Here Comes the Brand New Me" - showing difference in Michelle; the TV one, like Jesse, doesn't let her emotions show near as much, and certainly wouldn't have cried then.

[570] "Dear Michelle: I've Got Bunny Business," Michelle is allowed to walk Comet. While she couldn't in "Comet's Excellent Adventure," she's only 7 years and 7 months in June, versus 8 and 6 to 10 months in this book. A year older, and a growth spurt, easily account for her having that privilege by now in books, though it could take a while longer in the TV Universe.

[571] "My Two Best Friends" - one of the clearest examples of the difference between book and TV Michelle, she comes up with how to help them co-operate on her own, though she needs a little encouragement to see she can have two best friends. If Mandy comes earlier, she may need help with ideas; book universe flows best with her coming midyear, though, as she's not vital to events in the first two "Dear Michelle" books. Since we don't see everything, even in books, Sam could easily be invited after Michelle and Mandy made plans, and therefore gone on the sleepover at Mandy's.

school, but by now I knew how important it was to do what you're told. The teacher knew she was the kind of leader a new girl needed.

You really can't fault the teacher for what happened next. I mean, Mandy was a scared girl in a new situation who had no friends. For all she knew, not asking Michelle to work with Mandy might have made things worse in the long run. Sure, we know now Mandy was a leader who just needed encouragement on the other side of the country and in a whole new school, but she couldn't have known that.

Besides, Sam wasn't having the problems she did. She wasn't acting out; she seemed okay. I doubt any teacher could have expected how bad Sam really felt.

And, Michelle still spent time with her; it's just that she was distracted a bit, like when she called Sam to come along, before going over to Mandy's on a sleepover that first Friday night, instead of Cassie's.

Cassie called Sam and did some stuff with her – she knew Samantha needed friends – when Cassie was jealous over Michelle sharing their secret code with Mandy, and going to Mandy's on a sleepover, and stuff. But, Sam likely felt some tension in that situation, so while it didn't hurt, it didn't help, either. Michelle felt frustrated about this as it was, and she was a normal, well-developed kid.

Sam had been over at the Larkins' most of that time, she could hang out with Courtney and wasn't between them. So, it wasn't too rough on her.

The important thing was, Cassie was over her jealousy by this point, and she, Michelle, and Mandy were all on their way to being best friends. Michelle was back to the point where she was able to focus more on Sam by today.

Even then, they couldn't tell for sure, because Sam just couldn't tell anyone what was going on deep inside her. So, maybe nobody could have caught any signs of a meltdown. It's just one of those things that happens in life, and somehow it worked out, to show the underlying problem. At the most, only Steph could have.

Stephanie:

The problem was that today, Sam did something I never expected. She excused herself to go to the bathroom, and then walked right out of the school. She wandered around for a while - throwing good sized rocks at cars and stuff for a few minutes, almost causing one to have an accident - and then decided to explore another building.

It was another school. In fact, it was my school. And, I just happened to be coming down for lunch. It was a "dumb criminal" story like Paul Harvey told, but the biggest problem wasn't the trouble she was in with me. Her running off alerted the school to a possible problem; events a couple nights later confirmed it.

Michelle - Fri., Jan. 27 – Sam's meltdown:

Steph grounded her over at Courtney's, so among other things, she couldn't just sleep at home. Steph knew Sam shouldn't be allowed to be lonely. She had no idea how much of a blessing keeping her at the Larkins would be, though.

I'd already brainstormed the idea of getting her a whole new personality. I'd suggest she go by Samantha, and while she wore nice clothes and long hair now, I recommended a totally feminine look, with really fancy dresses and the like and really fancy hair, too. I knew shedding her image of the "rebel Sam," which she'd tried to do herself for a long while, was important. I planned to help unveil the "new look" at her

eighth birthday party in about a month.

Courtney and I were totally unprepared for the torrent of tears that came as we began talking on this night. Sam complained of such loneliness, I couldn't fathom it. The only thing I could maybe compare it to was what everyone must have felt like when my mom died. I imagined they'd been crushed, from all I'd heard.

Let me interject that there was never any danger of Sam thinking of hurting herself at any time. Steph told me, when she came to comfort Sam and help get her to sleep that night, that I had to let an adult know right away if I ever heard anything like that; Courtney was told that, too. Our parents each explained more the next day.

Thankfully, there were never any problems of that sort.

Danny – Sat., Jan. 28 – Precautions with Sam:

We did "move Sam in with us" instead for a few weeks, since she was closer to Steph. Steph figured she needed a lot of protection. Michelle may have babied her even more, if that's possible. As much as Michelle did, Sam thrived on it.

There was room to store that play table and chairs beside Michelle's bed if they needed the whole floor in their room. So, in that space we put a small, rollaway bed for Sam, and moved things a bit so it was a couple inches from the wall yet.[572]

Steph had so much of her mother's excitability, and worried so much at first, she suggested all sharp things be kept away from Sam, as a precaution. Sam never became anywhere near that depressed. However, Dr. Steiner, who we remembered from after the earthquake, said that was a good idea at first, so we let Steph continue with that order, though we assured Michelle there was no need to worry. Thankfully, Michelle believed us. We didn't want her worrying and making Sam anxious.

One reason Sam was never that bad was her nature; she really wanted to succeed, no matter what, just like us. Another part, however, was that we kept showering so much positive reinforcement on her. Stephanie had a look as she rushed over that evening like a mother would have if her baby was hurting, and she had to help. She really was pouring her heart into Samantha, partly because of that excitability from Mom.

As noted, the schools realized Monday that it wasn't just a cause for concern; they had to report it. It still wasn't necessary for them to remove Sam, because of the support system in place. However, the parents were told they had to co-operate.

D.J. – Tues., Jan. 31:

A social worker, Mrs. Morris, called Dad last night, and visited us today. She said getting Sam in to see Dr. Steiner was important. As Kimmy so bluntly stated, though, it wasn't like getting permission would be easy. They already let us do everything, and Kimmy said even she wasn't "dumb enough to antagonize them."

Mrs. Morris said they'd contacted the parents, and told them to co-operate fully with us, or be ordered to have an evaluation. When she called it "good cop, bad cop," Kimmy blurted, "If we get to be policemen, can I be Barney Fife?" Steph thought that was perfect for Kimmy; Mrs. Morris liked how we humored her.

Jesse – Fri., Feb. 3 - Dr. Steiner's Initial Observations:

Thankfully, nothing else was wrong. As it was, the only major problem was that

[572] There appears to be room, as they're not there in every episode and have to be somewhere.

Sam had suffered lots of emotional neglect over the years. That was a lot more of a problem than we imagined.

Like most people probably do, we presumed abuse like Charles suffered - or even emotional abuse - was far worse than neglect. I think hearing about Charles was part of that. On the outside it didn't seem as bad with Sam, though granted he was a few years older than Sam. Sam's attitude and behavior had been improving, after all.

Dr. Steiner said that given how we'd handled everything with her, the parents could continue to keep technical custody of Sam, since we did so much anyway. She could tell Sam loved us – Steph insisted on going along with Danny and Sam, and it was hard to tell which girl was holding tighter to which.

Becky:

Stephanie's protectiveness with Sam was more evident after she learned what Dr. Steiner explained; she said the emotional scars might never go completely away, though they dissipated well in time. In that first of what would be regular visits for years, Dr. Steiner told us Sam needed a mother figure, and that Stephanie had become that person. Michelle was like a big sister to her, too.

Steph was dumbfounded. "Me, a mother," she kept saying. She then began rambling about what that meant for later, and started worrying about when Sam started going out with boys. She quickly realized she was sounding just like Danny.

The doctor liked Michelle suggestion of a total makeover and a change from that rebel image - she said something about an inner voice that each of us have, and how a makeover to Samantha might help her feel more positive. Dr. Steiner said the scars might never totally go away, and that they should keep sharp stuff away as a precaution, though it would never to be a factor since Sam would never think of hurting herself. She also said Sam should be alone as little as possible. Which meant she should always spend the night with us or the Larkins or some friends, at least. So, she did.

Danny – Feb. 9 – Samantha's Daycare, Parents Co-operating:

Sam's daycare wouldn't take kids in after they turned eight. She would have only had a few more weeks there, anyway.

Sam normally had permission to be picked up by anyone if the daycare was told she would be, and she'd often come to our house or the Larkins' even before this.

Even her parents had been concerned that Sam wandered. Now, they were much quicker to co-operate with us, so they wouldn't be forced to. As Dr. Steiner noted, they practically treated us like a foster family anyway, having a daughter they could show off as a "trophy," yet not doing much for her, letting us be the real family.

The need for companionship was great, but so was the need for that "inner voice" telling her things would be okay. Michelle made sure Sam had more. Sam got a complete makeover – including a "new" name, going by Samantha from now on.

There was also a need for a father figure. Samantha had been able to point to us and the Larkins as her "family," to Steph as the mother figure, and so on, but hadn't had a real male role model. Joey would be a good one, though.

Michelle – Stephanie not too tough; Cassie, Mandy best friends:

Steph was worried she'd been too tough on Samantha, with where most of that

unruliness had come from. I told Steph Sam always knew she loved her. Dr. Steiner agreed. She assured Stephanie that she hadn't been too harsh. In one very early session they talked about how Samantha felt very comfortable with it. She understood Steph always disciplined her out of love and believed that she'd always handled things just right. Once Steph was certain of that, she felt a lot better.

Cassie and Mandy had quickly grown to become best friends, just as they had with me. Now, we were all determined to help Sam any way they could.

Joey - Feb. 25 - Sam becomes Samantha:

I'd sensed that she felt most comfortable around me. Dr. Steiner confirmed that I was the best father-type figure for her. Also, she emphasized since Samantha had so little interaction with family, it was important to hang out with Jesse and Becky and with Mr. and Mrs. Larkin to learn how married couples should interact. It wouldn't have been good for her to just go from guy to guy looking for love, but that was a danger.

It wouldn't be a danger with Steph as a mother, though. Right away, Stephanie prepared herself for the prospect of finding boyfriends and so on down the road.

For now, Michelle set out to help her have the happy childhood she hadn't so far.

D.J. – Samantha's Princess Party:

I understood the new image, but the lengths Michelle went to in giving Samantha a happy childhood were incredible. I've heard you're never too old to have one, but she took it…not as far as Joey, I'll admit, but it seemed like it, in a way.

First, Michelle had asked Aunt Becky to organize a Princess Party for Samantha. That wasn't too odd - it went along with the very elegant and frilly look she'd suggested for Samantha's makeover. Aunt Becky and I gave her a few tips, and we ended up with what we thought was a nice princess theme, while still appropriate for an eight-year-old girl. I figured she'd want something a little more grown up.

The decorations Michelle ordered - through Dad, of course - were more along the lines of a three or four year old's, though. I think even Dad was a little unsure, and he was normally very big on sentimentality and keeping us young.

Then, there were the tapes. "Michelle, are you sure you want Nicky and Alex's Sesame Street tapes?" Aunt Becky asked early that morning, before Samantha had awakened from their sleepover the night before the party.

"Of course. I want to give her the parties she never had."

"Well, that's fine, but…" Aunt Becky made a face. "Your dad tells me you rented 'The Little Mermaid,' too. And you have duck, duck, goose listed as one of the party games. For second and third graders."

"One of my friends suggested something a little more mature, so we can watch it plus 'The Little Mermaid,'" Michelle assured her.

Her planning was geared toward a six-year-old, if not five. Samantha was that size, at least, on her way to four foot ten as an adult; she might have only been five foot or so if not for the early stunted growth.

Her size wasn't important, though, it's what fun she had, and she loved the party. She'd befriended many kids by this time, between dance and the Honeybees. It was vital that she have as many as possible. They had a blast at the party.

Michelle overdid quite a bit of the pomp and ceremony - I doubt anyone cared for

Sesame Street tapes or needed to play duck, duck, goose at age eight. However, the important part was, Samantha loved it. Sure, they'd had a small sleepover here for her sixth, and something with the Honeybees for her seventh. But, this eighth birthday party was one Samantha always treasured. It marked the first time Samantha really felt like she was a part of something special. She'd known she was wanted and loved before, but the extent to which we all went was incredible.

And, I was so proud of Steph and Michelle for what they did, I wouldn't say anything. From what I heard had been revealed at Dr. Steiner's, such things were very helpful and healthy for Samantha.

Danny – Sheltering:

I often celebrated to the point of cheesiness, because of losing Pam. I didn't have to do that all the time then. But, there were many times, over the next months and years, that Samantha needed us to do that for her. My girls not only made her feel loved and wanted, they went overboard from there.

Samantha might have felt a little too sheltered at times. Still, when it came to attention, she soaked it all in, and greatly enjoyed it. Stephanie filled the role of a mother, and held her in her heart till she was surrounded with goodness and warmth. Samantha overcame as much of the inner turmoil as she could, which was quite a bit.

Becky – Attachment, Joey as a father figure, etc.:

We chatted with a psychologist we'd had on our show, as well as Samantha's, in March. The difference between how Samantha felt and full blown Attachment Disorder was that she was capable of bonding with Stephanie easily. That meant a part of her brain that caused her to be able to bond with someone had formed in the first months of her life, thanks to her mom a little bit, the maid probably more than we realized, and various workers at that center. She still had problems, though.

As she became "more mobile," as the maid had described it - after her first year to eighteen months - the parents made no effort to play with or talk to her, or even interact with her, except for a few things. Her parents would change her diapers – even that was the maid at times - hurriedly throw junk food on the table or just let her grab cookies or whatever when she came home, and take time to tell her they were taking her to some lavish party, where they'd let her run loose. That's it.

When Joey took her to one of her first sessions, we learned why Samantha wanted him as a father figure. Danny was very organized, and Jesse wasn't her style. She liked all of us, but she really felt attached to someone who would be fun-loving and childlike like Joey, not threatening in any way. Her parents, because they didn't show any love, were too tough, even though they didn't enforce limits at all.

There was one thing that showed that she was a little like some kids with severe Attachment Disorder, though. In growing up, she'd developed little identity, not much idea of who she was. This was because she'd had to fend for herself so much without anyone to maintain a bond. This caused self-esteem problems, but early on, she made a conscious effort to become like Michelle. She saw in Michelle a girl who was successful, well-liked, and everything. Samantha misbehaved because of all the anger and pain inside – one reason shedding that image was so helpful. However, she still had more resiliency in her than someone with full-blown AD probably would. She was able to come up with

ways to cope on her own, and to try to copy someone else.

It's funny. I told Stephanie that maybe her warning in that first encounter might have been more beneficial than she realized. You see, Samantha learned from that warning that Stephanie would protect Michelle at all costs. Maybe that tiny part of Samantha that still felt it possible to bond saw this, and thought to herself, "If I become like Michelle, Stephanie will protect me like that, too."

She had. But, by now – probably by that first time they said "I love you," in fact - Samantha realized that she didn't have to be like someone else to be loved. Stephanie – and all of us – loved her for herself. She was very special to us, and always would be.

Michelle – Tanners doing plenty of stuff on their own, too:

I felt comfortable letting go a few weeks after the party, but seeing Samantha like that was rough, and I was a bit oversensitive one time. My frustration over something as simple as being fooled by junk mail probably came from sadness over how bad Samantha felt, but I felt fine after that, knowing I was loved no matter what.[573] So, I was still sensitive, but I was never that sensitive again.

Stephanie – Spring break vacation:

A week or so after that, Dad took us on vacation to New Mexico. It was really relaxing for all of us. I had my first real kiss on that trip, but I got too excited about that to help Michelle when she wanted me to help her practice for a play at this ranch.[574]

This showed I was having some problems focusing too much on boys, but we were much closer than we might have been without D.J.'s proactiveness. I only went so far as to show embarrassing pictures of her once to a boy, and started to help Michelle more again after a small accident at her horse jumping contest.

Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky had gone elsewhere here. Joey and Samantha wound up going with them to Sea World with Nicky and Alex, and bonded more. Seeing Joey and Samantha bond was great. I was glad, after a couple months, that Samantha felt safe going with the others while we went to New Mexico.

Missy, Papouli, Grandma Tanner, and many others figured Samantha would keep thriving more and more with us. And, she did. Of course, prayer was a key, too.

D.J. – Apr. 29 – Michelle had only minor concussion, no amnesia:[575]

This means Samantha wasn't as scared – though she was still as scared as Steph – when Michelle hit her head falling off her horse. It wasn't bad, just a small concussion and an overnight stay in the hospital for observation. She was woozy after a few seconds, and even got up with our help once the paramedics made sure she was okay; they have

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[573] "Lucky, Lucky Day" – Quite plausible and explain why Michelle overreacted a bit.

[574] Book, "Dude of My Dreams"

[575] All the reasons in this blurb – asking D.J.; more in control; Steph's example in "Gotta Dance;" and the freakish nature of the TV Unviverse accident, hitting a stone just right – show why she wouldn't have the serious accident. And yet, given the same horse, the subconscious flashback to a fall in "My Life Is a Three-Ring Curcus," and a couple other probable book allusions, some type of fall likely happened. As noted, Steph was closer and would grow even closer to Michelle fast, but may have needed a little nudge, as most felt while she wasn't too mad, she did pull out photos like in "Crushed." And, a small concussion, with no amnesia, would result, with Michelle and Elizabeth walking horses around to protest parental unsportsmanlike acts in their "strike." As noted, Steve would stil take D.J. to her prom.

them at every event like that because of the kids and the risks. The crowd cheered, and with her mind a little foggy, she asked if the Giants won.

She and Elizabeth might have gone onto the trail otherwise, especially if she asked Uncle Jesse; but, being so well behaved and in control, I doubt she would have. A bigger accident wasn't a real possibility, but a bit bigger concussion could have been, I suppose. Her horse could get antsy, so it bucked unexpectedly. The important thing is, she asked me since I was the Momlike figure. I suspected Dad was pushing too hard. When she told me, I suggested a small strike like Steph had done with her dancing; she and Eliabeth walked their horses around like a normal show. Samantha had had a chance to go with the Larkins, but chose to stay and watch. Michelle's only aftereffect was that, since the concussion knocked out a couple hours of her memory, she didn't recall the fall, and a subconscious fear of heights came later, which she conquered.

Michelle and Elizabeth had proven their point with their little "strike," though, and neither Dad nor Elizabeth's mom ever pushed their kids real hard again. They became civil, and the girls became friends. I'd been pretty concerned yet, and hadn't found a prom date, but Kimmy located Steve and he took me; she's really a great friend.

Michelle still couldn't do much for a few weeks as a precaution, but that let her help others some. For one, she helped one boy try to convince his parents to let him keep a pet rabbit a few weeks after her riding accident, and Dad was even comfortable with letting her go to a day camp the zoo had the first couple days of summer.[576] And, of course, she kept helping Samantha, who really learned a lot about faith, too.

Jesse - May, 1995:

Samantha really had begun to learn how to have faith that things would work out well; really, she'd started to learn that the minute she met Stephanie.

`Unlike with Charles, it wasn't overly dangerous for Samantha to be where she had been. We did a great job, and Samantha's parents accepted us. The doctor, Danny, and the school all agreed. As long as the parents kept co-operating, Samantha was cared for well enough. Her parents let us deal with Samantha however we saw fit. Steph could even enforce lost privileges on her before this. And, her parents had provided her with food, clothing, and shelter; except, of course, she wouldn't be in their house for long now, just to get overnight stuff and things like that. Later, she could – and would – host a sleepover or two there, but not right away.

It still seems incredible today, in a way. But, the doctor was right - Stephanie had already become like a mother by this time. And, that meant she was truly dedicated to aiding Samantha with all her heart.

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[576] "Dear Michelle: I've Got Bunny Business" - can easily be here, so "Dude of My Dreams" also happens. A month after her concussion, which isn't as bad in the Book Universe, she could help; it's not strenuous. As mentioned, it's possible that, while in a different class in the first 4 Michelle books, there is a class paper of some type. But, taking after Stephanie more – even saying "how rude" a few times – she could easily have kids come to her by word of mouth. Each instance in the "Dear Michelle" books could happen without there having to be a paper, let alone her having to have any kind of advice column.

XI: TAKING THE LEAD: May 1995-Jan., 1998

1. Books and Businesses

Stephanie - May 18 – Planning to Protect Samantha:

"It still amazes me, Steph," Allie said, shaking her head. "You're like a mom."

"I know. It's incredible." I'd always had an abundance of energy. But, nothing could have prepared me for this. Sometimes, it's good that we don't know the future. Still, now that it was here, I was ready to dive into it headfirst.

"Doesn't your dad get kind of nervous about you having this large a role? I mean, he is pretty protective," Darcy noted.

I concurred as we hung out in my room. Michelle played with friends in Joey's basement apartment. We'd end up letting them hang out with us at Darcy's pool this summer at times, too – partly because of her concussion, partly because Samantha would be there, anyway. That's about all we did all summer,[577] and they did a lot, too, at first. I babied Michelle, though I quickly got more confident that she'd be okay.

"The thing is, Dad's helping me. It's just like the PA position - no girl could do that alone in Australia or over in Britain where they have them. I get lots of help from Dad and the others, and some of the stuff like doctors they handle. I'm just there for her in that case. Though I'll admit, I provide a lot of emotional support."

"I know they've talked about peer mediation programs in the school system, too; other schools are experimenting with that. It's clear kids can do some things within reason, if they're mature enough, that really help others," Aunt Becky said. She'd joined us because part of our discussion centered on business ventures. We wouldn't start our babysitting business till fall, but we were considering it.

Darcy teased that I'd done so much I'd bring in all the clients. "Come on, Darce. I always want to ensure that we know where Samantha is, but you guys have done your share of things that will give you bonus points with some." Indeed, I'd end up grossly overestimating my own skills at running a business in a few months.[578]

"And, we don't live near a really bad place, though it's bad enough to live so close to San Francisco. It's still a concern when she rides her bike all over."[579]

"Good point, Allie," I said. "Her size makes her potentially easy prey for bullies."

"Too bad she wasn't interested in karate, though at least D.J.'s taught her some basics that she recalls," Becky said.

I agreed. Samantha's life was too filled otherwise to consider martial arts.

Thankfully, she appeared to be good at making friends. A few times, she met kids on the other side of town, and invited them to be guests in the Honeybees. There was still competition from the Brownies for the girls' attendance, and of course sports and things took some kids' time. Plus our hive generally only covered our local region, though at Camp Lakota there were Honeybees from numerous backgrounds, several from inner city San Francisco or Oakland. Still, she brought a couple visitors who stayed.

Our discussion naturally drifted to some of those friends. We wanted to keep her

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[577] "Back to School Cool"

[578] "Sugar and Spice Advice" mentions Jesse and Becky's anniversary. The twins' ages mean they had to marry earlier than TV. The book was released in October, and Steph's thirteen, implying a fall date. Plus, Steph starts the babysitting business while still thirteen. She has better business acumen than in her cooking business here, where trying to do too much alone results in very funny situations.

[579] In several books, Michelle walks to school or rides her bike to another school, downtown, etc., easily enough to show it's a suburb, like the TV Universe, but yet big enough there would be concerns.

away from the wrong crowd, as she tried to surround herself with lots of friends to ward off the problems associated with having no parental supervision or love.

Becky:

"Jesse says they talked to one ad agency. Someone had spotted Samantha at a recital and suggested her," I told Steph's friends by way of explanation. "Her parents have to sign the contract. The agency is faxing a copy to them today, and they're sending us a power of attorney form that will let your dad make those decisions, Steph."

"That's great! Thanks, Aunt Becky. See, guys, this is the kind of thing I need my family for," Stephanie said in response to Darcy's earlier joke. "Uncle Jesse and Joey made sure this agency was okay, since they were in advertising. Dad told me about how Paul Harvey never does an ad for a product he and his family don't use, and I have the same rule for Samantha. And, you can bet with the problem D.J. had for a few days worrying about her weight,[580] Samantha is never coming within a million miles of modeling!" Stephanie stated emphatically.

"Whoa, Steph, easy," Allie urged. "It's not for everyone, and her self-esteem problem might rule it out. But, you don't have to sound that frantic."

Stephanie had to chuckle. Slightly red-faced, she said, "Caught in my own excitability, huh? Okay, maybe a few hundred miles is all right." Holding up a finger, she half joked, "But, just because the earth is only 25,000 miles around."

We shared a laugh. "Well, you certainly meet the protectiveness requirement of a parent, Steph," I said. "I know, you think about D.J. wanting to lose weight just to fit into a bathing suit, because she didn't realize her true friends cared about her no matter what. You worry about Samantha's self-esteem and whether it might be more of a disaster if she started to think she had to lose weight. Sometimes she doesn't feel accepted yet. However, we could always watch so it isn't a problem."

Stephanie steadfastly shook her head, and I let it go. I understood why she was so adamant, given Samantha's outburst just a few months earlier. She wasn't so emotionally fragile that that would be a constant worry, though. So, Steph softened her stance later. One thing that helped was a girl who moved into our district. This girl modeled without being so concerned about her weight that it made her sick. Steph even entered a modeling contest, but lost to her.[581] Stephanie eventually said with close monitoring and only reputable agencies, Samantha could model or act. But, Samantha never showed any interest in acting beyond some stage and commercials. And, she never showed an interest in modeling. Neither did Steph after that one time.

"Turning to friends, there's another area where she could face some really bad influences if we're not careful," Stephanie said. We discussed some of the girls Samantha had met. If Steph didn't know them, she made sure she got their names and phone numbers. She - or, occasionally, we - called their parents or guardians and talked to them, to make sure the kids weren't going to influence Samantha the wrong way. I know, at age eight that wouldn't be quite as big a problem as later, but it could have been.

"You know, I understand you guarding Samantha like a mother lion guarding her cubs," I reasoned. "But, don't you think you're a little too protective sometimes?"

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[580] "Shape Up." Though D.J.'s more motherly, mature grown women worry too much sometimes, so it can easily happen in the Book Universe when it comes to the D.J. part.

[581] "Picture Me Famous" – the date is uncertain; it could be squeezed in at the start of the year if needed.

Stephanie didn't think so. And, in a way, I could understand why. Like Pam, she was always so excitable. And, Samantha had no other supervision.

Jesse:

Samantha was, of course, not allowed to spend the night at her house, since it had so many bad memories of loneliness. However, her sleepovers often were at the Larkins' or others' houses, though she did plenty with us, like enjoying that swimming pool with Steph and her friends this summer.

I could see why a bit better than Becky could. But, I figured Steph was trying too hard and Samantha was rebelling a bit.

Becky said I had a good point about Samantha wanting a feeling of independence. Even with all the negatives of that mansion, it was home, and she gravitated there a bit getting her overnight bag or playing there with a friend a few times. And, that feeling of being forced to go places might have been part of the negative feeling of not feeling any real family love her first few years. But, the main problem was, she wondered if she'd be accepted at times. Hence, she surrounded herself with so many friends, and participated in so many activities. Frankly, she did so much now, she wouldn't have had much time for one of those after school programs for latchkey kids if she'd wanted.

Danny - July 23, 1995 - Disneyland:

Samantha still spent plenty of time with us on weekends. She had sleepovers at friends' houses all the time during the summer; she had plenty of friends. She took vacations, too. One such time was with our family to Disneyland in southern California.

Samantha loved it, though it wasn't quite as big as the one in Florida. This was just thrown together after Michelle recovered and could play sports and stuff again.

Stephanie – More TLC:

I still couldn't believe those mother figure claims, in a way, but regardless of those, a really sweet thing happened at Disneyland.

Near the end of the day, Samantha was really worn out from all that walking, the rides, and so on. Suddenly, as we prepared to leave, she looked up at me, lifted her arms, and said, "Carry me?" in a very worn out voice.

She was still light enough for me to carry part of the way. Samantha laid her head in my chest, and heaved a contented sigh, as if all was right with the world. And, I started to wonder if Dad was right. Maybe she couldn't articulate it very well yet, but she was in the arms of the one person who had grown to be like a mother.

I didn't take the time to contemplate it much, though. I was just glad she felt loved. Still, it was incredible to ponder that she sensed all was right with the world because she was in my arms. I wished I could help her feel that comfortable all the time.

D.J. - Aug. 19 – Camp, Living at Home, Thinking About the Slumber Party:

Courtney and Samantha went to a different place for day camp this same week. Michelle went to her first overnight camp alone, feeling very anxious but eventually staying. I guess she really took after me; I was the same way at my first overnight camp. She'd gone to day camp at Camp Lakota the last couple years while Steph stayed for a week and Kimmy and I worked there.

I'd wanted to live at home regardless of where I attended college, because I was still like a mom to my sisters. I could be there for them more easily. I eventually chose San Francisco State for all the volunteer stuff, the motto and everything encourage that, and the journalism, though I'd switch to nursing. Plus, Darcy's dad worked there, so it barely edged out California University, which was also in the San Francisco area and thus very handy if I ever did commute, which I wouldn't.[582]

Now, however, not only was I helping Kimmy figure out how to get into beauty school, Steph's work with Samantha increased my desire to stay at home.

The nice part was, Hannah and I attended the same college. She could handle lots of volunteer work. I could, too, but I really wanted to make sure Samantha was taken care of, as well. This was a family effort, after all. For instance, I'd help with Samantha's mother-daughter slumber party. Yes, Steph would take Samantha as her "mother," but as I expected, Michelle wanted to go with her, and Samantha wanted her there. So I took Michelle, just like last year at her mother-daughter slumber party.

I also provided lots of assistance with decorations and things. Samantha had gained enough confidence, she was convinced she could host one, with all of our help. And, she did - in her own house. Part of the estate wasn't even used, and had been cut off for that night. However, a century ago, the family's ancestors would host incredibly large, lavish formal gatherings.

It was ironic that the first big party hosted there in decades was a girls' mother-daughter slumber party. In a way, it was poetic justice, too.

Danny: Wed. Sept. 27 – More On College, Darcy Connection:

D.J. was starting to do very well in college; she'd gotten a really good first grade there. We decided to celebrate as a result. That led to Stephanie wanting to accomplish something, too – so she started a run for the class presidency.[583] I always knew one of my girls would be President someday.

San Francisco State's motto is "Experience Teaches" – she would have been close to going there anyway, with the journalism program, but nher having beren proactive opened her up to how fun it was and how many needed help. Samantha, of course, had done that even more. But, there was another connection.

Back when the Flamingoes had tried to steal my phone card, they'd also tried to steal Darcy's dad's. He worked there, which was why he had the money where it'd be valuable, unlike Allie's. He was heavily involved in it because of the volunteer efforts in the inner city all around the Bay Area.[584]

Darcy, of course, became good friends with Steph, so that had some influence, but I think D.J. would have been close to choosing it anyway, because some of the programs helped people who were close to us. Even if it had only come in a close second I'd have

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[582] Though usually busy with school, she always lives there in books, even if some don't mention her; one that says otherwise violates canon in most other ways, too (out of character, inconsistent dates with books or TV, Danny and Pam not married till after college), so it's a dream at best. Campus in BU books matches San Francisco State. It's close even on TVU and NetU which she'll attend.

[583] "Winning Is Everything" – not much of the Tanner home is seen during the less hectic first week of campaigning, which means many things, such as this and the Michelle book "Welcome To My Zoo," could easily happen at the same time.

[584] We never know what he does, but this is reasonable for his having such a card and beign as well off as Danny off. He could also volunteer there, which is also quite likely.

learned my lesson about not pushing her, but now I'd learned for sure. Of course, I guess I didn't as much since she always was proactive as a mother figure; I might have pushed a bit too much otherwise, I'll admit.

Stephanie – A better business than her cooking and catering one:

Even though I was also running for class president, I wanted something to do that was more of a team effort, too. I babysat a fair amount, and enjoyed it. So, Allie, Darcy, and I chose to open our own babysitting service.[585] We were only in the discussing stages during my campaign, but this time, we would take our time and do it right. I wouldn't try to do everything too fast like I had with my cooking and catering one last week. I figured I could still be president and do it, and we started to map out a strategy

Jesse – Fri., Sept. 29:

Danny was still a bit worried about Michelle. When Jeff cheated off her last week, he didn't react very strongly. And, it wasn't just because he was certain she hadn't copied Jeff. Sometimes, concussion victims find things too hard. Frankly, he was worried she might have been hiding a sudden problem with math from that accident, though she didn't seem to have any when she went back to school last spring. I suspect a guest talking about severe concussions on his show made it worse for him.

As it turned out, Jeff confessed right away, even before she had a chance to say anything at their meeting with the teacher and Jeff. His parents couldn't be there because of work. They were having some marital problems, which caused him to not be focusing too much on math and trying to cheat.[586]

Thankfully, Michelle never had any problems because of that concussion. And today, we not only were all excited about Steph's election, we watched Michelle dance ballet. She wasn't really graceful, but she'd put something together on her own that was fun.[587] And, that's the most important part with any activity a kid does.

Stephanie - Sat., Sept. 30 – There for Samantha's Tonsilectomy:

Samantha had been invited to dinner with us to celebrate my election as President, after her Honeybee meeting; it was on a Saturday because it wouldn't fit into her hive mother's schedule Tuesday. Anyway, Samantha's throat was really sore, and we got her into the doctor on Monday. We were hit with bad news - Samantha needed her tonsils removed. Thankfully, we were there for her.

I felt horrible for Samantha. I really wished I could just kiss it and make it all better, or that I could choose to need that done instead of her. I'd really begun to feel for her like a mother might. She went into the hospital Wednesday. Ironically, my first week as president was spent with her taking a day off to care for a sick child.

Joey – Wed., Oct. 4 – Pets, etc.:

We were there the whole time for Samantha today. Well, except for in the

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[585] A recurring theme in a number of books, though it alone doesn't make a book Book Universe canon, as she could easily start doing it more after the TV years, as noted

[586] "My Fourth Grade Mess" – Danny doesn't seem bothered that she might have cheated, yet doesn't sound like he knows she didn't, either. Fear of an aftershock of the concussion is rather possible, but a guest talking about worse ones is probably needed to make it really plausible.

[587] "Ballet Surprise" – could fit in most places, best here.

operating room itself, but even Danny wouldn't be that protective.

Steph thought about her quite a bit, and could get a tad preoccupied. A good example of that came tomorrow. She took Comet out with her friends as a break, when she knew there was a pet parade where Michelle wanted to take him. Danny could tell it was rough for Michelle; she wanted Samantha to be well just as much. Also, he wanted to reward her for how well she'd done with Samantha. So, he bought Michelle her own guinea pig next week, and Michelle loved it.[588]

Both girls still loved Comet though. Later, in the spring, Michelle and Steph even tried to enter him in a dog show as a sister team.[589]

While Steph was still holding pretty tight to the reins, she started to let go a little. All things considered, Samantha was gaining confidence, and while she still needed careful watching as far as friends and other things went, she seemed like she'd get along rather well. However, the teen years would provide their own struggles.

With things always busier at our crowded house, Samantha stayed at the Larkins while she recovered from her tonsillectomy. Stephanie let D.J. and the others help with the organizing for Samantha's slumber party. She was anxious to host it, even though she never stayed in that huge house; it did still have her stuff in it, and it made it feel like it was hers and hers alone to host then, instead of one of her friend's.

Danny – Oct. 5:

Steph tended to try to accomplish everything at once. Even without thinking about Samantha, Steph found being president was too hard. [590] Hence, Becky didn't mention their business to her group of mothers – a playgroup plus club for sharing ideas and such - right away. Becky knew it would mean tons of jobs.[591]

Once she resigned as president of her class, she took over full force.

Jesse – Sat., Oct. 7 - Helping Jeff's parents:[592]

Becky and I went out with Jeff's parents tonight.

They'd been trying to reconcile since both learned how Jeff cheated that time; I guess you could say it was a cry for help from Jeff, though he didn't realize it.

I told Michelle it might not happen – look at how hard it was for Samantha with all of us helping. Still, I understood why Michelle wanted us to talk to them. If we'd had more differences, it might have been even easier, but she knew we had unique habits, even if Becky and I never quarreled badly. I mean, I knew Becky wasn't crazy about Elvis, and I wasn't too fond of the great outdoors, unless I was riding a motorcycle through it. Still, we got along wonderfully.

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[588] "Welcome To My Zoo" - she isn't allowed to get her own pet after realizing in "The Great Pet Project" she can't take care of one as easily a year earlier. She got the hamster in third in the TV Universe, but it's really a joint venture between Steph and Michelle, and for the purpose of teaching her to care for something, whereas she's more mature here in third, so doesn't need that encouragement.

[589] "A Dog's Life" - a great book even if you're just a dog lover

[590] "Winning Is Everything," Steph only ran to have something special to brag about because D.J. had gotten a really good grade – possibly her first grade she got back - in college, and Vice President Allie became class president

[591] "Babysitters and Company"

[592] It's not known that they got divorced. Frankly, this is more pleasing. Something elsewhere saying they did could be non-canon, but more likely, the author wanted it to be open-ended.

We tried to encourage them to get things into the open. With so many boys, Jeff's mom felt lots of pressure that she thought his dad was ignoring, and that he wasn't willing to be a father fig. His dad had lots of difficulties at work; he felt she didn't care. In reality, noone was communicating because they were so busy.

We tried to model honest discussion, but we were no marriage counselors. Still, Jeff's dad had moved out, and we convinced him that maybe he should move back in – we also tried to connect them with the minister who had been so nice after Pam died. I think they both saw it as just too hopeless a few weeks ago, when Jeff had his troubles. Now, however, they were starting to realize there was hope.

Becky:

In a way, the lack of communication was better than if they'd been shouting and insulting each other. Jesse brought up his own parents, and that helped them see maybe they could accomplish some things. There had been things unsaid that should have been, but it's much easy to say those than it is to unsay anything.

Because there had been no huge buildup of animosity, they began to talk about ways in which they could get back together. Date nights without the kids each week, the husband going back to his old job instead of the one he'd been promoted to, realizing money wasn't everything, and the wife promising to talk instead of just expecting he would understand; I really needed to explain things to Jesse sometimes, so they really saw a good example of how that worked with us.

This didn't happen overnight, of course. We certainly didn't do it alone; that minister and others helped a lot. It might have happened without us helping. But, by the end of the year, the husband had moved back, and they'd agreed to have a weekend getaway, just the two of them. By the end of the school year, things were great.

It's amazing - years before it became official, we were already like family. Maybe that was just a sign it was meant to be.

D.J. – Sat., Oct. 14 – Turtle Races and Best Friends:

Each of us girls was blessed with wonderful friends. Kimmy was Kimmy, but she was still a great companion. Stephanie had a few problems; mostly with Darcy, since she was newer, most often surrounding boys. But, her friends were both very close to her, and remained so. And, Michelle had two special people just like Stephanie did, who would always be there for her, no matter what.

Today, one of them won a race for her in a unique way. Michelle had borrowed a turtle, and promised to race it with a t-shirt from the pet store on the back. But, when the turtle crawled out, she got anxious trying to find it, and then she forgot to hand in an entry form. Her friends Cassie and Mandy had their turtles, and Mandy raced first in the preliminaries. Well, when it was Cassie's turn, she picked up Michelle's turtle, because she knew Michelle felt badly about not being able to race after she'd promised the owner she would. Cassie won, but with Michelle's turtle.[593]

That's one of those special things that friends do for each other, that shows why they're so important to each of us. True, Kimmy couldn't help me as much as I helped her, but with someone with challenges like that, even though some were her fault, you learn to love and accept them. Stephanie and Michelle both remained very close to their

[593] "The Fastest Turtle In The West"

friends. The only difference is, Steph's were further apart geographically when they grew up, while Michelle's stayed nearby.

Samantha was finding those friends slowly but surely, thanks to our family, Courtney, and others. Michelle's and Steph's friends both helped quite a bit, too, especially Michelle's, since they were closer to Samantha's age, though I don't think they realized the importance of that till after Samantha's breakdown.

Joey – Not Going With Suzie For a While:

While Danny had recovered very nicely, making us so proud, after a few years, my girlfriend wasn't past the first year of her loss yet. So, the time with Samantha and I was a little harder for her.

Had I not spent so much time with Samantha, things might not have gone as fast as they seemed with my new girlfriend, Suzie. However, when Samantha wasn't hanging out with Stephanie and her friends at Darcy's swimming pool, she and I were doing lots of fun stuff. We went to the park, rented funny movies, had pizza together, and even took in some baseball games together. And, over the last couple months, because she really enjoyed that "time with Daddy" that she should have been getting at a younger age, we just naturally did cool, family stuff with Suzie and her kids, too.

However, Suzie was a widow whose husband has died less than a year ago. The more she thought about all that "fun family stuff," it just seemed too much for her, just like it had been rough for Danny to go out with a woman right at first. About a month ago Suzie told me it was going too fast.

I understood. It hadn't been dating, but it had been immersing herself in stuff that probably made her feel like it was too close to being the Brady Bunch. We remained friends, but only next Mother's Day did we really let things get romantic.

Danny:

Instead, Joey planned a special radio show for Sweetest Day. Sweetest Day was originally for orphans and shut-ins without family in the 1920s. However, it had grown to be about romance, and Steph liked a boy named Kyle.

On Joey's special show, students could send messages. Steph wanted to send Kyle a comment on Joey's show. Unfortunately, Kyle asked her out then, and she found out he was way too domineering as far as deciding what would happen on the date, so she cut ties with him really fast.[594]

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[594] "Ten Ways To Wreck a Date."

"The Big Fix-Up Mix-up" has Steph wanting to ask Kyle out, but there, Joey's show is on Valentine's Day. It's not Book Universe for reasons noted in the NetU part and below. Steph's part gels with Sweetest Day, so it doesn't conflict with "Full House Sisters: Will You Be My Valentine." So, Joey did 2 shows.

In other words, Steph and Kyle must have gone out soon after "Sweetest Day in "Ten Ways To Wreck A Date." The start can be at the end of her presidency. Sweetest Day is Midwestern, but California is a top state for it. It's huge in Detroit, and Joey likely lived there - he loves Detroit sports.

However, *only* Steph's part asking Kyle out in "Fix-up…", plus the fact of the Sweetest Day show, are book canon, though on Sweetest Day, Jesse and Becky's could be. Not mentioned in the NetU note on it is parents are at a medical convention. Allie's family is poorer, not one with a doctor. Flamingoes also didn't bug Allie at first because her dad didn't have a fancy phone card like the others; a doctor would in '95-'96. People selling medical supplies go to them (Gia's mom or birth dad could), and setting up dates for Joey is a Steph and Gia thing, more intrusive. It and other differences (character problems, only book w/Joey on second floor) in the NetU note show why other parts are TV canon only.

Joey had booked a few comedy shows even before this, thinking Suzie could come; for a while, he booked more, so he had something to do.[595] He'd had his own nice comment for her, though, and she appreciated it; it may have helped for later.

Stephanie – Mon., Oct. 23 – The Baby-sitting Business, Michelle Helping:

Our baby-sitting business began slowly, with a few referrals. In a few months, once we were doing really well, we got a lot more. Even before then, however, I'd have lots of toddlers and preschoolers, but that was okay; it seemed easier at first.

This, of course, gave Michelle the idea that she could baby-sit just as easily, because she was so accustomed to Nicky and Alex. In fact, she often helped bathe them, read to them, and put them to bed, and so on.[596]

I think many kids in her shoes get anxious to grow up - she thought working with Nicky and Alex meant she could baby-sit just as well as I could. It didn't look hard, because she'd never dealt with really difficult ones. She'd never had to diaper or feed a toddler. Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky let her do easy things, on her level, because at age nine she couldn't take in as much or handle lots of stuff at once.

She insisted on learning, though. After a while, she was hanging around me and just dying to do it. So, I brought her along after a little over a month, and expected her to act like a professional. She did pretty well, all things considered.

Danny - Sat. Oct. 28 - Joey Doing More Comedy For Now:

Joey flew off to do another comedy show early this morning, and would be in late Sunday. He'd planned to slow down his comedy tours, but that picked up again for about half a year, since Suzie had decided things were going too fast.

He also enjoyed setting up his own comedy shows, including an ice skating venture called "Yuks on Ice" for January.[597] He had the radio program, as well.

He provided a very stable father figure for Samantha. Stephanie, meanwhile, had found her niche as a sitter.

Michelle: Nov. 11 - Another honeybee party, sleepovers away from the Tanners:

What an exciting party we had! Cassie and Mandy came with their moms, and I arrived with D.J., along with Samantha and her hive. Other than Steph, most of those with the girls were mothers, though there was one aunt and one grandmother

Samantha explained that after she met us, she'd had lots of pretend parties in that big place with stuffed animals, especially Mr. Snuggle Bunny. He was to her like Mr. Bear was to Steph, and then some. She'd always see him as a special friend. She said the fun we had was just like what she envisioned a real get-together to be like there.

She'd started staying at ours and other friends' houses early this year; we used this time to set up times for her to stay at least a few days at each Honeybee friend's house, since she didn't want any of them to feel left out.[598]

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[595] Like with Steph's babysitting, numerous books mention Joey doing comedy shows in different places. It's logical that he would have decided to devote more time to this in both universes, only to settle down later, as he made one more push to be a professional comedian.

[596] A big part of Book Michelle's personality is that she enjoys things like this.

[597] "The Penguin Skates"

[598] Most books can take place with Samantha there, given the number of Tanners she could be doing things with. However, it not only makes sense that as she gets older, she will be going more places, but also, given

Joey – Samantha's Skills:

We'd really opened Samantha's eyes to the joy of using her imagination. She enjoyed writing stories, including some with animals like Mr. Snuggle Bunny, thanks to my pretending with that. She was quite talented at that. As she grew up, she considered doing that after ballet; we'd encouraged her to have something for after her career, since ballerinas usually don't dance beyond age twenty-five or thirty. She sang and did a few ads, too, and appeared on TV for a while next year on a local kids' show.

But, her greatest skill was ballet. I always told her, if she had a chance to be a great one, she should try. Steph did, too - she knew the more time she spent on dancing, the fewer problems she'd have.

Steph was a bit worried, though. What if Samantha wasn't good enough?

Michelle never had those worries. She always seemed so positive about Samantha. In her mind, Samantha already was a superstar ballerina. However, Stephanie was concerned that if Samantha got her hopes too high and couldn't make it, it could devastate her. Still, Michelle could show Samantha other avenues, too. She ran for president at the urging of her friends,[599] and made a great fourth grade class president.

Together, the sisters formed a great team. They'd had small differences, but not like they might have; they were great partners. For instance, Steph became a bit obsessed with room rules once, and Michelle comically insisted Steph follow what she'd written and posted even more. They quickly called a truce, though. They easily laughed about it there were no more problems there.[600]

Overall, Stephanie encouraged Samantha a lot, too, and had mastered D.J.'s style of not letting younger kids sense her uneasiness. Stephanie showed lots of enthusiasm; it's just that sometimes, Michelle appeared to provide enough for both of them.

D.J. – Tuesday, Nov. 21 – Start of Michelle as President:

Michelle was so psyched up about her election as 4th grade class president. She was really excited, and had good ideas, though she only ran because her friends pushed her to defeat this new, snobby girl named Rachel who moved here recently.[601]

She got a little carried away with a class project starting on the 27th, the Monday after Thanksgiving. She and her friends came over and dug up the backyard before they realized another class had played a joke, marking a map of gold mines during the Gold Rush so it looked like our house was right on top of one.[602] Still, I wasn't near as upset as

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the situation, she will be a lot more concerned than necessary about spending time with each one. Plus, as her friends learn some of the extent of her situation, most will leap to invite her to spend time with them, anyway. So, she's in the background in some books, but not many.

[599] "If I Were President" – Samantha's party can be just before or during this book; we see more than 1% of peoples' lives in books, but still not nearly everything they do.

[600] "Ten Ways To Wreck a Date"

[601] Created for the "Michelle and Friends" series. If okay otherwise, books which could happen before she came ("Pigs, Pies, and Plenty of Problems," late October) can be Book Universe canon, as can those where she could be there and unnoticed, or normally there but out with the flu or something.

[602] "There's Gold In My Backyard" – a book that must happen sometime, it's so funny. Another sign of D.J. as a mother figure; Michelle seems much more concerned than she would be if it was just a big sister's stuff, like on TV. D.J. acts more like a mom, asking if she doesn't think she should tell Danny, and agrees not to when Michelle promises to clean her room for a week in return. With the need to fit it somewhere, this is best. She can help with Nicky and Alex in "The Baby-sitting Boss" in the evenings during the events

Michelle thought I'd be when one of her friends used my good tennis racket to pan for gold. I'd instilled in her a good dose of healthy respect for others' things. So, I easily laughed at it, knowing that she wouldn't let it happen on a regular basis.

I enjoyed playing tennis in college. It was a great stress reducer, and something I did partly because I was freer now, just as I'd played on the varsity team in high school for a year. I was doing my own thing more, while still able to keep an eye on my sisters. It's just one example of an activity I wouldn't have taken up had I just reacted and tried to do my own thing all the time earlier in life.

We fixed Michelle's bike up quite a bit, too. Steph had gotten a new bike at age six, like I had; hers was from Joey. But, by Michelle's age Steph was using a hand-me-down from when she and I were each nine.[603] Michelle had had a couple before this one, but Dad liked to save money, and he expected us to learn the value of a dollar instead of just getting everything. Plus, we gave a lot to charity.[604]

Steve – Dec. 1 – Still good friends with D.J., slowly getting closer:

I was really glad things were going better for everyone. I'd taken D.J. to her prom, and today I caught up with her at the mall. We were each shopping for Christmas, and decided to sit down at the food court to chat.

We'd kept in touch since the prom, of course, and I was always amazed how busy her family was. Given that, I completely understood her desire to take it slow. Had she not been proactive, we might have gotten back together faster. Now, we remained good friends, and we found ourselves doing the same thing we would have anyway. We were listening to each other more, and I was sharing more about my family.

I'll be honest, part of why I told her so little about my family was, it seemed boring in comparison. I mean, who cares if I have an uncle who lives miles away who juggles,[605] when she's got one who lives with her who plays music, and another who's like an uncle who does all these amazing voices? She was more interested in the physical, just being together, but I was, too; I was still young.

Now, however, we shared a lot about each other, and really worked toward a close friendship. She didn't want to think about romance; she was way too busy. But, I got a good tip about her Grandpa Nick wanting someone to take over his exterminating business. I applied and was quickly accepted. I wound up really liking it.

Danny - Sat., Dec. 8 – Michelle baby-sits with Stephanie:

Michelle thought she could handle the rigors of babysitting, because she did so much for Nicky and Alex. She even putting a sign out in the yard like for a lemonade stand, saying she could do it.[606] Steph finally granted her wish today. Only later did I learn what happened – years later.

Michelle had helped a lot with Nicky and Alex, while Jesse or Becky worked on other things in their apartment, so they were in the next room. Her mind couldn't grasp how complex a job it really was. She had little to worry about, except for handling a

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of this book; they fit well together while others might not.

[603] Steph's making money toward a new bike in the episode "Please Don't Touch the Dinosaur" – it's to replace this hand-me-down. She'd surely outgrown the one she got in "Mad Money"

[604] Several books mention this, including "Fastest Turtle in the West"

[605] "A Date With Fate," a logical reason why, in addition to what else he says.

[606] "The Baby-Sitting Boss"

simple routine. It was hard to explain to her, but Steph knew just what Michelle could do, it seemed, so I figured it was okay if Steph took her along.

Michelle had been good at feeding and diapering, with comical consequences. Just her patience was admirable in that case. Steph was proud; in fact, she worried that Michelle was a little too good. So, she went with her other plan.

Steph went for diapers and left Michelle in the house with the two-year-old for a very short time, but didn't tell me. In fact, Michelle only told me her senior year in high school. By then, I could laugh it off as a sister handling her in her own way - and, I think Steph did a great job, just as D.J. had earlier. It taught Michelle that while she was a great helper, she wasn't near old enough to watch kids on her own yet. However, Steph had Allie and Darcy waiting and watching the house, just in case. They were ready to go inside with Steph's key, but Steph got back quickly.[607]

Michelle assisted as Stephanie watched three boys next Saturday, the 15th. Steph even used Michelle to help with four-year-old triplets.[608] Michelle's mind wandered, when Steph wasn't watching closely, but that's expected with a girl Michelle's age. Most important to her was helping, like she did with Nicky and Alex.

Becky:

Steph made Michelle do quite a bit of the grunt work, to show her just how tough it was. But, that was understandable. Michelle had it easier with family, but Steph was in a business. She got paid for watching someone's kids, and that took a great deal of care.

It was experience like this that taught Michelle how important professionalism was, and makes her such a great home daycare operator now as an adult. She'd found it pretty rough, but learned that she really enjoyed and had a knack for it.

In a way, too, Steph was doing with Michelle just what D.J. had done with Stephanie, giving her more and more responsibility and discovering some real talent.

Michelle didn't help Stephanie a lot - she was never an equal partner or even Stephanie's faithful sidekick like when they worked with Samantha. However, anytime Steph was in a bind, she knew she could depend on Michelle.

Stephanie – Her plan to teach Michelle:

I had to teach Michelle a lesson. That was tough, because I was pleasantly surprised at her. This was the perfect kid to do that with, though; not too rough, and good at hiding, from what her mom had said.

Years later, I told Michelle about my phone call while she was busy. I'd arranged for Allie and Darcy to hide and sit with binoculars, in case Michelle got so good I had to go that far and call them. I'd left the house key with them. They were just about to come in and help when they saw Michelle near the phone. Luckily, I showed up with diapers just in time, so they didn't have to barge in. But, imagine the look on Michelle's face if they had happened in just as she picked up the phone to call for help!

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[607] Quite likely, Steph's tricky like D.J.. It's a Michelle book so we only know her POV and what people tell her. Steph says she never should have left her alone to teach a lesson. That lesson would not stay with her as well if Steph tells her someone was watching. So, the plan detailed is what was done, that Michelle didn't know about; Allie and Darcy would have gone in if Steph didn't get back fast.

[608] The first are mentioned at the end of "The Baby-Sitting Boss," the other trio get their own book, "Babysitters and Company," where Steph hopes Michelle will help, but Michelle's more intent on finding the class rabbit she's taking care of. You have to read to find out, but it's funny.

I never left Michelle alone with a charge after that first time, not till she was twelve. She realized how inexperienced she really was after that. However, she had done very well, all things considered. And, she'd learned her lessons from the time I did go for a few minutes to get diapers.

Instead, it was mostly letting her help when I was outnumbered, like next weekend when I watched three boys. One family had me baby-sit all day during Christmas break this year. Allie and Darcy helped with this one, but Michelle was busy playing with a clumsy distant cousin and keeping him company.[609]

Of course, in with all this babysitting, I still had my own life with lots of fun at school, and helped Samantha a lot. She was gaining confidence and becoming close to Courtney and all the Larkins. She would still always remain closest to us, though.

Joey – Mon., Dec. 10:

I'd gotten Samantha involved with a very nice ad agency. I'd recommended the agency because her teacher often had them doing really fun things; ironically, one of the directors was Michelle's teacher's younger brother.[610] She had done a couple ads with Michelle and Courtney, or just with Courtney. Then, she did a few by herself, though something else grabbed most of her interest. This agency also used Michelle's class in a dog food ad just before Christmas. Not all kids get this many chances to be in ads, but Jesse and I knew people from our earlier contacts. And, sometimes those "small world" stories help, too; we all have those once in a while.

I was doing lots of comedy shows, as well. I ended up doing another series of them this week, as I had after Thanksgiving. I flew out today, and got back later that week. Soon, Michelle would be off school entertaining a cousin - for longer because of a scheduling experiment with a slightly earlier start and a break from a week before Christmas through January first - and Stephanie would be babysitting again.

Stephanie – Fri., Dec. 21 - Teaching Samantha the same lesson as Michelle:

I met the mother at the door at about 8:10, a good fifteen minutes before they would leave for work. "We usually have a sitter for the younger ones, and of course the two oldest are in school," she told me. They were aged eight, five, three, and one. "We know how good you are from Becky, though."

I smiled as Allie and Darcy went in and helped the kids to clean up the breakfast dishes. "I'm just glad to be able to help while your sitter's gone for the holidays," I said.

In a way, I thought it would be good for Michelle to be here, but I didn't want to burn her out. She'd assisted me since that first time, anyway, and didn't need to think she could do it all like she had before that initial job I gave her.

However, up the street came a girl riding her bike who took after Michelle in every way. "Hey, Samantha," the eight-year-old cried out. She glanced back at her mom and asked if she could go ride her bike.

She left with Samantha, who had spent the night at one of her Honeybee friends' homes. My friends and I each spent time entertaining the others. At lunch time, I heard

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[609] "My Ho-Ho-Horrible Christmas," which says she'd be watching these kids while the parents worked, but that could and likely does include Allie and Darcy helping. Still, much more plausible with her having that experience, especially with Samantha.

[610] "Smile and Say 'Woof'"

two bike horns as the girls came up the drive.

"Hey, Samantha," I said, giving her a big hug. The five-year-old boy asked if she was my sister. "No, she's just…Well, I help take care of her." I didn't want to tell them the full details, though her friend likely knew some. The way I said it, he figured I was Samantha's babysitter sometimes.

I dished some soup for everyone, including Samantha, and changed the subject.

"I have an older and a younger sister. Michelle's keeping someone company near her age while the family's visiting, and D.J.'s off with friends today."

"How come you didn't drive here? Your sister drove," the oldest boy asked. He'd seen D.J. drop me off."

"I'm only thirteen."

"No way, you said your sister's in college," the five-year-old said as the oldest two and Samantha ate soup, the three-year-old girl slurped it, and Darcy fed the baby.

I knew at his age, he would think that being the same age meant the same size. "Well, different kids grow at different speeds."

"Yeah, like Samantha. She's eight, too," the eight-year-old said.

I was glad Samantha didn't feel apprehensive about her height. But, I knew some things had to be handled more tenderly with her than with Michelle. She was even more blunt, but also much more emotional than Michelle. I would never leave her alone to baby-sit, even with someone watching where she couldn't see.

However, she had begun to inquire about helping me like Michelle did. Therefore, I knew I should show her something.

As Allie reported that the baby's diaper was stinky a short time later, I invited Samantha to come help me change it. She advanced to the changing table quite eagerly. She looked ready to tackle anything.

Her nose instantly scrunched up, and she backed away slightly, as I opened the diaper. "Ewwww, gross!"

"Pretty messy, huh? You know, I have to do this if you don't."

"Do it, please," she insisted, waving her hand in front of her nose. "How did Michelle do it?"

"Let's say that's one part she didn't like, but she knew it had to be done."

"I'm not ready for that!" she stated emphatically, thinking not only of the stench, but also of the mess as I tossed the diaper away, cleaned the baby, and put a fresh diaper on him. "That's just gross."

Once I'd let the baby up with a fresh diaper, I knelt beside Samantha. "I know, it's hard work. When you're twelve you can assist me in babysitting, but not before."

I knew things like discipline would also be very hard for her. I didn't like it, either, and certainly would never fwap a charge, unless the parents said emphatically that it was to be done. Even then I'd try to make it just a light fwap, and it would be hard for me. I really felt it was a parent's thing if and when it was needed, when done on purpose; I was just the closest thing Samantha had back then.

However, Samantha would have trouble even giving timeouts, given how wild she'd been before her makeover. She hated thinking of those days, or of any child needing punished. All things considered, she was one of those who had to be a good deal older than someone like Michelle before she was ready.

Luckily, Samantha agreed, and she and her friend went off to play.

"See, Allie - one whiff of a smelly diaper, and she's cured of trying to take on too much responsibility before she's ready."

Allie snickered. "Yep. Just like I smelled my great uncle's pipe smoke once and I never wanted to smoke, ever!" She made a gross face.

"Exactly, although babysitting isn't hazardous to your health." At that moment, a block thrown by the one-year-old hit me in the head. "Then again…" I said as Darcy corrected him and I rubbed my head.

D.J. – Sat., Jan. 13, 1996 – Trying to help Rachel be nicer:

Michelle really provided enough excitement for both - she did the same with that snobby girl in her class, Rachel Tilly. She gave Rachel the job Joey gave her in "Yuks On Ice," before knowing what was involved. When Rachel heard that crowd cheering, she really appreciated it. Even after having gotten a pie in the face, like Joey originally planned. He knew Michelle wouldn't mind. Michelle loved performing.[611]

Michelle always tried to model pleasantness and kindness to Rachel; she'd seen it work so well with Samantha, after all. Michelle had seen it work elsewhere. One really bossy girl, Julia,[612] really turned Michelle off with her bossiness, though she wasn't as arrogant as Rachel. Julia was in their grade, and eventually got better, but Steph and others had had to talk to her quite a bit about toning it down, too.

Julia got better faster than Rachel because Rachel had never learned how to be nice, and thought she had it all already.

Still, Rachel started to get a little nicer after this, as she was thankful someone had been nice to her; just like Samantha had needed to know someone cared.

Still, Rachel teased Michelle at times, and could still get arrogant, despite the good parents she had. Things like this and Stephanie hosting the class Valentine's Day Party made her start to see a difference, eventually.[613]

I would be remiss, though, if I didn't mention prayer. We didn't do it a whole lot, but we did it more than if I hadn't dedicated myself years ago. And, we made sure to keep praying for Rachel to get better. By fifth grade, Rachel would be a little nicer.

Michelle – Jan. 15 – Michelle's business:

As the new semester dawned, I hoped to really show Rachel how fun it was to be nice, though my friends and I had our own troubles with starting up a business this week, including a worm that got out of Steph's science experiment and into Rachel's lunch by mistake.[614] Cassie, Mandy, and I still ended up having the best business, and we had a great Olympics style series of games in late February.[615] I think Dad was right, Rachel would be bugged this year just because I was president and she wasn't.

Danny – Michelle's attempt at a TV show, losing to the twins, etc.:

Michelle was the typical good 4th grade girl; she struggled a little with being accepted as she was, but lots of kids go through that. There were no really big problems

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[611] "The Penguin Skates"

[612] "Dear Michelle" books. Which Kindergarten class she's in is uncertain, but Michelle would dislike her bossiness even just seeing her on the playground.

[613] "Full House Sisters: Will You Be My Valentine?"

[614] "Unlucky In Lunch"

[615] "Field Day Foul-Up"

there, mostly in one situation that still showed her maturity in a situation that D.J. had more trouble with, probably because D.J. was the oldest.

Michelle got a pen pal from England near the end of January.[616] Each tried to impress the other. Michelle thought her friend was a model, so she boasted of having her own show; she was anxious to audition for this one that our station was going to have. In the end, they both revealed to each other they had normal families. The pen pals finally met in person in 2000, and one of this girl's friends would become Samantha's pen pal in 4th. Samantha's really did perform on stage. They all remained good friends.

It would have been funny if Michelle had gotten to do the show. It lasted around a year, then the wave of nationally syndicated shows started replacing local ones. It was a once a week thing with news and other things of interest to kids.

However, she was beaten out as the host by Nicky and Alex's silly singing before the audition. She took it a lot better than D.J. did when beaten out by Stephanie for an ad in a similar fashion.[617]

Joey:

Samantha was one of the reporters. She hadn't wanted to compete with Michelle for the host's spot; Michelle had told her the real reason she wanted the job, like she'd told Cassie and Mandy. Samantha got nervous at the audition when Michelle hadn't made it, wondering if she could do as well. Michelle joked through her disappointment that Samantha was ten times better, and Nicky and Alex ten times cuter, than Michelle. She also emphasized that no matter what, Samantha was still loved.

Samantha was relieved that she got a part, but watching Michelle handle her defeat so well really helped her grow in confidence that she was special to us no matter what she achieved, because Michelle saw herself that way.

Michelle – Mon., Feb. 12 – Class parties, etc.:

Steph hosted my class's Valentine's Day party last Friday. It was super.[618] The outfit she came in was really funny; Rachel had to admit that her mom – and very few others – would do that. Usually, Dad, one of the guys, or Aunt Becky hosted them for me; D.J. had a time or two. This was the first Steph had done.

It was harder, of course, for Samantha, because Steph was still in school. A couple times she did it after school, but more often it was Joey hosting hers. Mrs. Larkin did it a lot, too, since Courtney and Samantha always shared a class.

I missed out on the area All-Star team, but Samantha would be on it a couple times, and I wouldn't have had time for it anyway, as class president. Still, I'd made the All-Star Game a couple months earlier, that was the fun part.

Danny – Mar. 4:

I was so proud of my girls. Steph and I, as well as the Larkins, showered lots of love on Samantha, and tried to include her in everything. Stephanie certainly deserved

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[616] "The Problem With Pen Pals" – as mentioned, "P.S., Friends Forever" is only TV canon, as shown by the concert she takes her pen pal to and a few other little things.

[617] "Sisterly Love"

[618] "Full House Sisters: Will You Be My Valentine" – the date of Valentine's Day that year means the party must be the previous Friday; it wouldn't likely be after Valentine's Day.

plenty of privileges the way she handled things. I gave her more than most kids that age, like the credit card or more money, but that's how I got when super proud.

We'd compiled plenty of pictures and videos for scrapbooks and such for her. In fact, when Michelle's class was putting together photographic essays last week, Michelle chose to use Stephanie, rather than Samantha. She figured Steph might feel left out.[619]

Stephanie – Computer access:

Dad took a while just getting D.J. a computer. We'd worked on D.J.'s, or Dad's in his office, for research and stuff before. But, I got the coolest present as I entered eighth grade; my very own e-mail account! Dad made me give Michelle a screen name on my account; that way, I was helping keep her safe, too. I'd even check for e-mail, like with that pen pal. Having a part in protecting my little sister made me so proud!

Anyway, D.J.'s old computer was given to Michelle and I last fall. D.J. got her own laptop for college; she needed a much more powerful one by this time.

I was so excited. I knew this was coming, I'd given my e-mail to lots of close friends, and gotten it into the school directory. I was one of few who had e-mail, but it was still really cool to be able to give it out; kind of like having a business card.

Michelle wasn't allowed on Dad's without someone else present – Dad only let me because he knew I was so responsible with D.J.'s.. Michelle broke his by accident the first full week of March. However, it got fixed easily enough, thanks to a boy who liked me, though I thought his e-mail was someone else's.[620]

We didn't have near the trouble Dad worried we could, and only used e-mail then, though Dad found a provider with parental controls anyway.

Jesse – Michelle declines PA possibility:

Michelle made a great president. Her teacher thought she might make a good PA. The PA didn't handle everything, after all. When it came to things like her campaign or the parade in late March that seemed like a lot to handle,[621] the principal talked to her because it was administrative, really. He was responsible for curriculum, making sure students were learning well and could handle things, and so on.

The PA didn't even handle all the discipline automatically. If someone kicked a ball through his window by accident[622] as happened once, or the principal came into the cafeteria because of a food fight, he was the most logical to handle it since he was right there, and he could calmly tell the person responsible it wasn't fair to make others clean their mess if they were responsible.[623]

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[619] "Hello Birthday, Goodbye Friend" – a book from Stephanie's POV, so we don't know other reasons Michelle chose Steph for her photography assignment. Late Feb., just after "Will You Be My Valentine?", so museum trip ("Baby Sitters & Company") is Saturday the 17th, a week after the Valentine's Day party. Steph and the boy from that party aren't as close by here, & Michelle can easily introduce her to the boy in "Matchmakers" in March, some California schools even start basketball that late.

[620] "Matchmakers." Unlike those considered Nicky and Alex stories, this is quite likely. Kids had e-mail by 1995-6, and these kids are quite likely to have had it on a San Francisco FreeNet if nothing else. The boy Steph had a crush on may have been unable to go to the spring picnic, but it works best if things go poorly because of Steph liking another boy in a different book before this.

[621] "Hip, Hip, Parade" – can take place during another book

[622] Louie, in one "Dear Michelle" book

[623] "Unlucky in Lunch" – considering she doesn't complain at all, shows Book Michelle's different character quite well, too.

The PA still handled quite a bit, though, and Michelle didn't think she wanted to have to handle discipline and other stuff. Therefore, she told Mrs. Yoshida early this month that she wouldn't want to be considered. Nobody said she was being considered as one of the ones to be suggested, but everyone knew she might be.

The teacher graciously accepted, saying she understood Michelle's reasons. And, unbeknownst to Michelle, while her wish was granted and she wasn't considered for the PA job, one of her best friends was. Meanwhile, she just kept on having fun with her own adventures, such as a comedy play in March.[624]

Michelle – Sat., Mar. 30 – Photo Project:

Samantha hated to see others left out; I did, too. I made Steph subject of my photo essay for class, and wound up helping her with it, too.[625] We already did so much with Samantha, and I loved being with Steph. It had to be on a person, so Jeff's wasn't any funnier than usual, though he picked the funniest of his brothers.

Danny – Apr. 8 – Mandy chosen as PA:

We joed today that I could be as corny with my kids' friends as I was with them; again, because while I'd recovered very well, I still mossed Pam a bit.

What had me so excited was that Mandy, Michelle's friend, would be a PA next year. She was so excited! She'd been encouraged to do it with Michelle class president this year, otherwise the girl who became class president next year, Denise, would likely have done it; she'd be a helper and do things if Mandy was absent.

Mandy's family had had a big part to celebrate. Samantha was there, too. Cassie, normally quite shy, said something funny, though. Michelle asked if she was jealous - Michelle had been class president, Mandy a PA, Cassie answered that she was holding out for Homecoming Queen. And Steph thought Samantha's hopes were high! Of course, we all remembered that innocent comment from a fourth grade girl who had no clue of the odds when Cassie was named Homecoming Queen their senior year.

Stephanie helped Mandy get used to the kinds of things she'd have to face this summer. Nicky and Alex weren't interested in pretending to be bad, though. Michelle had helped Jesse and Becky so much with them, they always wanted to be good, even when pretending, as she rubbed off on them. [626] That suited Samantha well, though. Especially because she was a bit smaller, she loved playing with them.

Steph then wanted Michelle to pretend, but she flatly refused, despite loving stage performances. She got easily embarrassed by her few misdeeds; not as badly as Steph but close. Thankfully, Cassie stepped in and played the part Steph asked, so Mandy grasped what correcting a best friend would be like. She never had to do that, however.

Joey – Wed., Apr. 10 - Musical Influence, Styles:

Dr. Steiner still helped Samantha through things, though it wasn't nearly as rough

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[624] "Is This Funny, Or What?" can even take place during another one this month. This lets "For the Birds" fit in March, too. That leaves early April for spring break, then "A Dog's Life" with the dog show. Steph kind of likes a boy there, but finds out he's two-timing her, but she'd have to be over the one from "Matchmakers" for her to be thinking about the other one, so "A Dog's Life" is in April..

[625] "Hello Birthday, Goodbye Friend"

[626] A staple of book Michelle's personality, whereas TV Michelle doesn't enjoy it as much, at least not the babysitting part. Therefore, they're somewhat better behaved as well in books from her influence.

as when we started. She was thrilled to see Samantha progressing so well in ballet and elsewhere. She knew Samantha loved it, and that Samantha didn't pay attention to lots of other music. That was fine; some people listened to it more than others.

As we talked privately after Sam's session today, Dr. Steiner noted that a lot of the lyrics kids heard nowadays were not appropriate for anyone. People didn't know how to write good love songs; all many wrote about was lust and violence. She said it was good that Samantha wasn't into that sort of thing. I was glad, too.

It made me wonder on the way home what Steph listened to, and how that might influence Samantha. I didn't raise such things directly, with how nonconfrontational I was. So, I asked D.J., before we took Michelle to the stables. She planned to practice for another horse-jumping contest with some of her friends.[627]

D.J. agreed quickly that, "Music isn't that great nowadays. I remember turning down those tickets last year thatsomeone gave you to a more modern group's concert. Steph didn't want to see it either – Kimmy and Duane went," D.J. reminded me.[628]

"I remember. I know she liked a little hip hop a couple years ago, but not much," I said. "What does Steph listen to now?"

"Only more conservative modern stuff. She knows how to be a good influence," D.J. assured me.

Danny was in on the discussion, too. "That's right, Joey. Steph's getting away from that kind of music slowly; she has since sixth, maybe seventh grade, in fact. Even that one talent show she was in, the music she danced to was tame enough for Michelle to dance the opening part of it."[629]

I concurred. "Yeah, you're probably right." I had to laugh. "I guess I'm being pretty responsible despite myself, huh?"

"You always have been, Joey; you've helped me a lot, and now you're helping her. Who knows, soon you and Suzie might even get back together," Danny said.

"Thanks, Danny. I sure hope so." He would be right.

Stephanie never was into the stuff she would have been. She dabbled in lighter modern stuff, but she paid attention to lyrics a lot, and made sure her music wasn't harsh, even before getting more conservative again around this time.[630] The worst she'd listen to would be like what she danced to in one recital when she wasn't paying attention to lyrics and Jesse picked it out. And, she heard it as "Love Check" when she did try to catch the words, and didn't think of to the rest of the words or what it implied.[631] Of course, a second grader wouldn't have understood the implication that much back then, anyway, but you know how protective Danny could be.

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[627] "How To Hide a Horse," as you'll see, takes place next year because of ages and some other things, but Michelle would still want to this year. Steph may be on a class trip over spring break with the Flamingoes, though that isn't certain; one early Sisters book with the younger girls at camp would only be TV Universe, though, no room and out of character for Steph in books.

[628] Book Universe version of that part of "Leap of Faith," the girls would never be interested in that type of music and would be too busy caring for others to be so focused on a concert like that.

[629] "Hip Hop Till You Drop"

[630] This is the pattern of books; a few that differ are either easily TV Universe or are so early (like "Hip Hop Till You Drop" in late sixth grade) that it wouldn't be that bad. (And even in that one, Michelle is part of the dance number, so the music is clearly okay for a second grader.)

[631] "Our Very First Telethon," she danced to "Love Shack," an unusual choice for the more conservative Danny to allow, but not for Jesse, who didn't always think back then.

D.J. – Samantha's interests, Stephanie's protection with TV:

Steph certainly paid attention to details in lots of stuff now, for Samantha's sake, though she'd done so before meeting her, too.

Samantha didn't need a lot of help with music, thanks to Joey. Lots of kids still loved Uncle Jesse and Joey's show. Modern stuff hadn't completely taken over the culture. Samantha liked to listen to stuff like the Beach Boys or Chicago – the latter was her favorite. We taught her early that some things were just not good to put in her head. Of course, when I think about it, perhaps the thoughts in her head because of what she'd been through early made it easy for her to want to keep bad thoughts out, and focus on good, positive messages.

When it came to dance, she did more classical – I mean, only Kimmy would suggest a hard rock song as part of a ballet. (Yes, she suggested it once.) For now, while dancing to numerous types, Samantha enjoyed songs like "You're the Inspiration" and so on. She danced to "Centerfield" once, too, a classic baseball song.

Speaking of center field, she tried out for Michelle's softball team, but preferred soccer. There was horseback riding and other normal kid stuff, too. She had a really full, fun life by now, and had turned into a pretty normal girl.

Still, Samantha faced temptations, and Stephanie had to keep restrictions on what she watched on TV till Samantha was thirteen. The biggest problem was cable and the advancing Internet. Someone said later that there were plenty of bad seeds in every generation in the entertainment industry. It was just that it grew to the point where such people had the potential to have access to kids' minds 24 hours a day.

Jesse – His Early Days; Radio Show; Samantha Writing:

This meant our radio show slowly changed. We became a station with more of a mixture, then finally had to quit and join an oldies one in 2005. We couldn't stand the way some music was headed. We were determined to have good, clean entertainment. I'd always loved guys like Elvis. Sure, in my younger days I was more of a hard rocker, but I was never the kind to do the stuff some did. Pam would have had a fit.

Even before her death, though, I realized it was good to avoid that stuff because there were so many better ways to entertain and better rock songs to play.

The Smash Club, meanwhile, was also undergoing a change. It was harder to find young bands who played stuff appropriate for teens, or for anyone. In June, the guy who ran the day-to-day stuff gave his two-week notice, and I had to search for someone to fill his spot; he was going to a bigger club, in a larger market. Then, we'd really have it rough till I found a suitable replacement.

It was rewarding for the whole family, but especially Samantha, to see us taking a stand against the raunchy, vulgar stuff and fore good, clean, and wholesome lyrics; same with what Steph let her read and so on. Samantha would be guided by Steph and quickly come to see how disgusting some modern entertainment was. Because of how she'd grown up, and her need to see others helped, Samantha was determined to leave some sort of impact by making sure kids had something good to watch and to read. It just put too many bad thoughts in her mind, and she knew it had to them, too. She hated the grunge and hip hop stuff just like Steph hated it. She loved ballet, but also loved writing; in fact, even now, she pondered writing childrens' books for a living.

It would be ballet where she first made her mark though.

Stephanie – Sun., Apr. 21 - Could Samantha go to dance school?:

It was too late for this spring, but in the fall, Karen planned to put Samantha in the same group I was in early in fourth grade - the kids who might have a chance to go to a summer dance school. Actually, the same fellow who scouted me back in 4th, from an area dance school named Bayview, was there this spring. I'd wanted to go to the Bayview one, and backed off, as I didn't see my family or friends.

But, he felt Samantha could go much further!

The Bayview scout felt she needed a little more practice, but that if she put her mind to it, by fall she might be able to go to New York for dance school! Though it was months away, my head spun. Not seeing her biological family wouldn't bother Samantha, since she never saw them anyway. And, she had many friends who did ballet with her. However, I still wasn't sure she'd really be that dedicated.

Second, Dad had pushed me to do it even after I decided I didn't want to; how would I avoid pushing Samantha too hard?

Finally, of course, the thought of her not making it alarmed me.

I relayed my fears to Karen as Samantha changed out of her practice outfit.

"Stephanie, I can imagine what could happen if she tried so hard and didn't make it. Remember, I'm the one who babysat her a couple weeks after you met. I had to keep dancing and moving all the time, just to keep up with her and get her interested in trying, that first time. Even after that, I could tell she'd really need someone in her cheering section all the time, even after she became more confident."

I inhaled deeply. "I just don't want her to pour her life into something and not have it work out," I said mournfully.

"Well, first of all, she has other interests. If dance were the only thing, that could pose problems. But, she can act - she had a small part in 'Sound of Music,' right?"

"Yeah, she did. She'd really like to play 'Annie' someday, too."

"I think she'd be terrific!" she remarked. "And, that singing voice is so pretty, and you said she writes good stories for her age. She's got lots of things she could do, even if it doesn't happen. And, I really think it could happen," Karen finished as Samantha came out of the dressing room, emphasizing the word "really." She said later she felt at least the Bayview one would happen, but hadn't wanted Samantha to overhear.

Samantha could sense the excitement in Karen's voice. "You really think what could happen?" Samantha asked eagerly.

I put an arm around her as Joey came to take us back. "It's a surprise, okay? I don't want to say anything in case it doesn't work out; and, it won't be till your next recital, in the fall."

"Oh, boy, what is it?"

Joey chuckled. "If she told you, it wouldn't be a surprise, would it?"

"I could pretend I was surprised later."

"Sorry," I said with a laugh. "This one's staying with me till it's time."

She grudgingly agreed. She knew my word was law to her, but she still had the zeal and exuberance of Michelle. In fact, Dr. Steiner once called her an uberMichelle - many of Michelle's traits were magnified in Samantha, such as her sensitivity, compassion, eagerness, and bluntness.

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2. Smoothing the bumps in the road - May, 1996-Jan. 1998:

Michelle – Sat., May 11:

Last weekend, I tried out for another play with Jeff. It was another comedy Joey had written for us, a funny version of Cinderella. The craziest thing happened, though; he kept trying to hang around my friends and I to rehearse.

As it turned out, he sort of liked me a bit. This was thrilling; my first sort of boyfriend! He wanted to just be good friends, but that and the amount he stuck to us then said something, at that age.[632] Steph and D.J. loved to kid me about it in a good-natured way, but Dad was a little nervous. Okay, a lot nervous.

Still, I went slow for Samantha's sake, and wouldn't get too excited anywayWe didn't want her thinking it was normal to go crazy over boys, and I wasn't as exceited as an older girl anyway. Steph was at times, but hers were more friendships. At times she wasn't going with anyone, which was fine. But, Samantha really took after me.

So, Steph didn't tell me till later about the possibility of Samantha going to dance school. I thought it was something to do with Samantha's acting that had her so excited. She was a bit small yet to play Annie, but there were good roles in other plays. Samantha and I encouraged each other in stage productions.

Even Steph was slowing down a little as far as boys. I think it affected her seeing that the boys she stuck with best seemed to be the ones I found. I looked at whether boys were nice a little faster than she did at times.

The best news was, after Mother's Day this weekend, Joey and Suzie were back as a couple again. This time, it would last, as they slowly got closer.

Danny – Sat., May 25 – Steph's Championship Game:

Michelle remembered how much fun she'd had playing, so she told the coach about Stephanie; there was a flu outbreak and it hit the pitching staff hard. And, suddenly, Stephanie was a baseball player again. Steph had pitched in relief a couple times, after getting onto the baseball team for the playoffs.

I'm not going to brag and say my daughter could have been the first female big leaguer – though I'd like to – but, she was good enough to pitch in relief. Then, when the team played a marathon extra inning game in the semifinals, she was the only one who hadn't pitched. The coach figured she was the best candidate to start once it got to be about the eleventh inning, so he didn't have her come in in relief.

Stephanie – The Winning Pitcher:

I was really nervous at first, when I joined the team. Still, I hadn't expected to play much. I figured it would be like Michelle's all-star game; just going to a few games and having fun. She'd only gotten in a few minutes, after all, and wasn't the star; not like when Samantha recovered from her tonsillectomy and shone in the playoffs last fall.

I also had a crush on our catcher, which affected me a little when I was pitching in relief last weekend. Finally, Allie and Darcy got me to admit I liked him, in the only way they could – threatening to have Michelle tell him for me before the game.

As for my pitching, after the first batter got out, I settled into a groove. I was just wild enough with my knuckleball to be effective. We won 5-2, and I pitched a complete

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[632] "Once Upon A Mixup" - given his hanging around all the time that weekend, it was a tacit admission.

game victory, despite not having great control of my pitches. I put a number of runners on, but I got out of a couple jams very effectively. When that ninth inning came around, I couldn't help but turn around slowly and gaze at the fabulous minor league stadium. I might never have become a professional, but the aura certainly felt like it. It was really breathtaking, out there in front of that huge crowd.

Our catcher was named MVP, and he threw out a couple of those runners for me. He wasn't a very good hitter, batting only .200 normally, but he hit .400 in the playoffs. I guess I sort of inspired him, which was pretty meat. It was my last game, as I retired for good afterward. I couldn't have pitched at a much higher level, anyway.

Joey - June 20 - Camps:

Justin, Suzie's oldest, was in Michelle's grade, but in another district. They went to middle school together, though; the school had students from a few elementary schools. When Suzie and I married, we bought a house in our neighborhood.

Michelle went to two camps this summer. One was a regular one with her friends; one was a circus camp where she overcame a fear of heights. It was an interesting side effect of the accident; she hadn't had such a fear before, but when she tried to ride bareback she fell off and was caught by the tether so she didn't get hurt.[633] Something subconscious must have been triggered even though her conscious memory didn't recall her horse-riding accident, or the couple hours after it.

Of course, they used a safety net, but still, Samantha was a little scared a few days ago when she and the rest of Michelle's friends and we watched her perform. Steph got like Danny then, of course - she confided in me that she hoped Samantha wouldn't want to copy Michelle in her routine.

However, even Michelle wasn't that enthused about circus performing. She'd won the right in a contest to go, and while she was glad for the experience and the friends, she decided she didn't want to do it full time. Her clown performance, though, was great, and I think she saw it as just one more fun thing to try.

I know Stephanie would eventually have let Samantha do it if she wanted, but I could hear a huge sigh of relief coming from her lips, anyway.

Jesse – New Manager Focuses on Variety, Wholesomeness:

Shortly before Michelle got back from camp, the manager of the Smash Club gave two weeks' notice that he was leaving for a bigger place in the Los Angeles area, as we said. That wasn't surprising – I'd known he'd looked at the job as a stepping stone to bigger things, and I was happy for him.

However, I needed another manager; I'd given up running the day to day stuff for the family a little over a year ago. The search for candidates wasn't promising if I wanted to focus mostly on music, or if I wanted to keep things wholesome and okay for teens. I could probably do one or the other, but frankly, even the wholesome part was tricky.

See, too many people thought they had to draw people by going along with the crowd. Joey, in his own, unique way, tried to encourage me, telling me that stuff would never go out of style. What was unique was his parody version of "You Must Remember This," that song from the classic movie "Casablanca." For instance, he sang, "You must

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[633] "My Life Is A Three-Ring Circus," the subconscious flashback is a very plausible effect, even if in the books she just fell and was out an instant and didn't recall the few minutes before.

remember this. A face is still a face. A pie is still a pie. On this you can rely. As time goes by." At times he could be a goofball on our show, but as we discussed the pending need, I slowly started to realize that maybe we did need to put more variety in general into our entertainment.

I interviewed lots of people. Finally, after a while, we found our person. The family home schooled their kids, and he was a dedicated Christian. His stuff wouldn't be the Billy Graham stuff; rather, it would be wholesome entertainment, which he said was necessary. He had faith that he could find wholesome acts, and he did. We still played music, of course, but he emphasized comedy even more at times.

We scraped by at times those first months and years, till we built up that niche, but with that and the expanded menus, we made it. I didn't like the fact there wouldn't be as much music, but I was willing to admit that music alone wasn't as viable anymore, with all the raunchy and vulgar stuff nowadays.

In the end, we increased in attendance – I hadn't wanted to admit it, but we'd had problems with that. We were able to carve out a niche as one of the few family friendly places where people could go and bring their kids, or teens could just come to hang out, on a weekend night. It wasn't like the old days, but I was coming to realize that the Smash Club, like my own life, had taken a turn for the better, away from the wild and toward the wonderful and wholesome.

We did keep the name. You think of smashing guitars and other wildness when you think of the name "Smash Club." But, he even came up with an acronym that we used when developing the ad for the place – "Satisfying Music And Silly Humor." What we did was, kids would do a cheer – "Gimme an S" and so on – and I'd do a few seconds of what that implied when it came to the new Smash Club. I liked it. With stuff like that, I knew we were going to succeed, and we did. It was a great niche.

Michelle: Samantha's acting, and an ice cream truck trick:

Samantha was in an ad for the Smash Club right after that change, in fact. It was a perfect spot for a child who looked younger. "I wasn't even bored," she said in it.

Joey got a pie in the face as part of it; he'd gotten one in others, too.

This made Samantha scratch her head and ask, "Is it me, or does he like getting pies in the face? He's done that in a few ads you've told me about."

"I guess he likes to stick to a script that he knows works," I guessed.

Speaking of scripts that I knew worked, this summer we had a little fun with the ice cream truck. We were out riding our bikes when we heard it, so we couldn't go home like we could if we were outside and heard it down the block.

We stopped to get ice cream, but we realized we didn't have any money.

"What do we do?" Samantha asked in a whisper.

Still falling for temptation a bit – I was still human, after all – I muttered. "You're an actress. Try crying; he might feel sorry for you." It's the same type of thing that made me consider forging an excuse note to go see a celebrity once months later, though thankfully D.J. caught and lectured me, so I never considered it again.[634] She didn't even need to tell Dad; it's a great example of how she was just like a mom.

Telling Samantha to cry worked here; the man gave us each ice cream cones.

We high fived each other; that had seemed like fun. She thanked me, too. Still, I

[634] "My Secret, Secret Admirer"

realized that it was sending the wrong signal; or, at least as much as mature near-ten-year-olds would. I didn't want anyone thinking they could always do that. And, I knew from what others said that Samantha was especially impressionable.

"You know not to pull that crying trick with anything really important, right?" I asked. She agreed, and I felt better. I figured she wouldn't take advantage of that, but as a leader, as everyone had taught me to be, I had to make sure.

In fact, as I thought about it, I felt a bit guilty. We'd asked for a gift, it's true. But, that Holy Spirit that lives inside when you trust Christ will tell you something's wrong. It wasn't big, but I felt it was something I should correct. It's important to listen to your conscience with little things like this so bad habits don't develop.

I preferred handling some stuff myself, when it came to Samantha. So, I asked Cassie and Mandy about it. Best friends like them are the best. You can go to them when you don't know what to do, you want to do the right thing, but you don't want to involve older people. They always love you, no matter what. But, they'll make sure you don't go in the wrong direction, because they love you. I knew they'd always advise me to do the right thing. I think they trusted Christ around that time, too.

Just talking about it helped. Cassie was a bit younger than me, but Mandy was a few months older, and she suggested that we could still pay for this time the next time we saw the ice cream man.

That's just what we did. That was the great part of having Samantha around. I could try to solve little problems like that on my own, just like when I was class president. And, it really was like having a little sister. It's amazing how much she looked up to me. But, it was more than that. We were best friends, too.

Danny - Aug. 10, 1996 – Other things with the family:

There were, of course, other things occurring with the family, though like with the Smash Club's new manager, they were a lot like one would envision without Samantha. Jesse and Becky still considered adopting, though now they were even more desirous of it. Joey and his girlfriend Suzie were getting closer.

Nicky and Alex prepared for Kindergarten. It would be half-day, but there was more debate than there would have been had they been born closer to the cutoff date. Their friend Cooper was really advanced; he was a grade ahead as it was, and his parents talked about moving him past first grade. As it was, they kept him with his age range so he'd be closer to his friends, like Nicky and Alex. They didn't want him to be like that kid in Steph's grade at another school, who really had trouble socially at first, though he ended up with a career in physics.[635] Cooper went into medicine.

Samantha – Sept. 2 – More Faith and Confidence:

I wasn't nearly as bold as Cassie with that Homecoming Queen line. But, I was feeling surer of myself. I got down on myself fast if I really messed up, but by now, the only big messing up I would do would be things like getting in late after curfew.

I was usually spending the night at the Tanners' or the Larkins', though I had other friends, too, like with dance. Stephanie had a group that would watch out for me and make sure I was at someone's home by a decent time.

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[635] A six-year-old sixth grader is mentioned in the episode "Fast Friends," Cooper is in "Be True To Your Preschool" – he could be in the same grade and 10 months older, but more likely is a year ahead.

Today, the first day of school, I wasn't paying much attention to the time, and one of Michelle's friend's dads found me while he was out driving around. He brought me home to the Tanners, where I would spend the night. Steph said I sounded like her when she wrecked Joey's car – which shows I still had some of my old nature, though she was exaggerating a bit herself. She was just like her mother, very excitable.

Anyway, we cuddled a bit, and she reminded me of what we'd talked about a lot at church when we went; we didn't go all the time, but it was good for me to learn about true forgiveness and grace like they shows. That night, I joined Michelle and her sisters as born again Christians, as I trusted Jesus to forgive me for my sins. I believed He died for me and rose from the dead so I could go to Heaven.

I never got heavily involved in church – I was in the youth group and such as much as Michelle and Stephanie. But, it gave me more to focus on the times I was down, knowing God was inside me and helping me. He would never leave me.

Just like the Tanners. They may not have been the most dedicated people, but the practiced what Jesus said about letting their lights shine. And, I started to grow even more confident after doing that that night. Which meant that, while I'd been doing it before because Stephanie and the others told me to, now I really felt confident that I was accepted, no matter what happened, not just at the Tanners' but everywhere.

Jesse - Oct. 12 - Not all perfect with Steph and Michelle:

Stephand Michelle did great helping Samantha, but they weren't always eye to eye. Michelle got way too excited with that photographic journal for Steph's tastes at times. And, Michelle wandered from Stephanie in New York City when Danny took them there over the Columbus Day weekend.[636] They spent hours finding each other.

Then, there were the times Michelle tried to find Stephanie boyfriends, resulting in comical things, though that wasn't misbehavior, just overexcitement, the same thing that allowed her to be so positive about Samantha. She loved trying to help in any way she could, and her plans turned out well.

Of course, Steph had it better; really. Nothing Michelle did ever resulted in a pie in Stephanie's face like when Steph helped D.J..

D.J. – Sat., Oct. 25 – On Stephanie feeling more grown up:

Michelle learned to have that faith because I had it in Steph and her. Even if I'd just reacted, I would have been using chores for numerous things. Today, I gave a week of my chores in return for not telling on Steph for sneaking into a party at my college. Steph had her own adventures that were never dangerous, but were quite unusual, except for the fact she was raising Samantha. She felt a bit more grown up than most. I was upset with how Steph kept trying to get on campus over the next few days, but when I saw she was humble and admitted she was wrong – which was easy since the boy Steph thought might like her liked another girl instead – I became that warm, mothering figure I always tried to be because Mom wasn't there.[637]

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[636] "Two On The Town" –first in a series should be canon, though no room for the second and it's more TV Universe. Camp in a Club Stephanie book is far more likely, as noted. Even here, more logical to say it was a three-day weekend. Columbus Day is perfect, as most schools don't get that many weeks off.

[637] "The Story On Older Boys" – Tough call because except for Stephanie's, ages all say the previous year. However, Steph would be more easily mistaken for a college freshman as a ninth grader than if she was only in eighth. If it's first semester of D.J.'s second year in college, she might still not have heard the term

Much of her time was spent trying to be more grown up than usual in ninth and, somewhat, in eighth; much more than most kids. Even without a designated position, she felt like she should be treated as if she was older than she really was.

Once she got that distinction a little over a year from now, she didn't push any more to be seen as so much older. She had something that said she was.

Michelle - Mon., Nov. 17 – Helping Mandy as PA:

I really loved the notion of being a teacher after being inspired by my fourth grade teacher last year.[638] Nothing prepared me for this, though.

It wasn't as bad as the flu outbreak that had me helping in Uncle Joey's class when he tried to sub and was losing control a couple years earlier.[639] The kids had all heard about how funny he was, and they expected him to do lots of crazy stuff. I was already considered a real leader then – I took after D.J., after all – so he asked if I could help a little, though it was mostly to calm kids down a bit and back him up.

Mandy was absent. So were several of her assistants, and even Denise Frazier, our fifth grade president. I grudgingly volunteered to help, but I really hoped I wouldn't have to punish anyone. Once I learned I'd have to have a long talk with a problem kid, though - a kid much like Uncle Jesse - I went to Samantha and asked her to help.

Samantha couldn't do as much as I could, but Mandy was just glad Samantha felt willing to help a little, like when she helped keep one of my's classmates from getting in with the wrong crowd. It pleasantly surprised a number of people. However, somehow, I always had faith Samantha could do something like this.

Samantha – Able To Help Others, Without Thinking of Past:

I was grateful that Michelle had faith in me. I was pretty nervous, though. I hated the memories of going there to get reprimanded by Stephanie. I knew even back then she loved me no matter how I acted, but still, it was hard.

Michelle needed help, though, and more importantly, she knew I could do it. It was only a lecture I had to help her give. I'd already talked to one of Michelle's classmates about a problem that classmate had outside of school. So, I decided to try.

It was pretty easy; it went much more smoothly than I'd imagined. I would never have wanted the position on a regular basis. However, being able to work with Michelle helped me feel a little more comfortable.

It also made me ponder a leadership position for myself. I could never be a PA, but I yearned to be like Michelle. Her leadership position involved helping make life better for others, not enforcing rules. So, I planned to run for president of fifth grade next year. I really thought I could win, which shows I was gaining courage and strength.

"electives" from D.J.. She'd only been shown D.J.'s class once, but could have seen other buildings, though she'd normally be too busy to see them. D.J.'s mom-like actions, her being much more willing to threaten to tell Danny than in the TV Universe, and Steph's actions are the keys. Plus, this just fits a lot better here than in the previous year, which is too crowded.

[638] Several Michelle books mention her fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Yoshida, inspiring her

[639] The other class's kids still would have heard stories, but with Michelle more in control, she can help Joey keep control and even try to teach a little, and Joey can do the experiment and such after lunch, too. It's odd they didn't just combine classes on TV, so they likely had something special in Mrs. Wexley's and didn't want to interrupt.

D.J. – Nov. 21 - Rachel's improvement:

Not only had Samantha achieved that, but she had done fabulously at her recital, and earned the right to go to dance school.

Rachel had gone this past summer. Michelle was working so diligently with her that Rachel was starting to mellow.

Part of that was because they were no longer rivals, since Michelle was no longer class president. Now, as Michelle demonstrated time and again how good it was to be nice, Rachel was finally getting the hang of it.

Rachel was still rather boastful, but at least by this time, she didn't put others down. She actually told Samantha she was good – telling anyone else they were good was high praise from Rachel.

This was possible because one of Michelle's main campaign promises had been achieved; the fourth grade and fifth grade students shared the same playground.[640] So, Samantha was once again in the same place as Michelle during recess. Rachel's one friend, Sidney, didn't listen to Samantha's warnings, though; she got a really loud lecture when Stephanie caught Sidney and some boys setting off fireworks today.

Joey – Dance, Soccer Taking Lots of Time:

We were excited to see Samantha progressing so well. She not only helped a few kids with problems, she was ready to enter dance school.

The ironic part was, she almost had more activities than Steph had, though that was important to keep her from thinking about loneliness. She always thought of herself as being surrounded by people who loved her. As for activates, she not only had soccer, which she was getting better at, her extra dancing classes before and after school had taken up a lot of time before the recital that got her into dance school. Much of her time at our house was spent on homework, just like when Steph tried.

After her recital, it let up, but she still had lots of work. Samantha also made her first of two straight traveling All-Star teams.

Not only that, but she seemed to take after Ted Williams. Just as the baseball great would practice his swing in front of a mirror, or while waiting at street corners, or something else, she seemed to practice ballet moves all the time.

It was here that Papouli decided to come and visit again. Since he'd had his pacemaker, he was slower but felt quite good. He loved hearing about Samantha.

Stephanie - Sat., Dec. 20 - Michelle gives a lecture:

While Joey took Samantha out to buy some Christmas gifts for us, I invited Michelle up into our room. "Okay, let me hear your best lecture."

Michelle scratched her head. "Steph, what are you talking about?"

"You know, I told you earlier this morning just before my ride in that horse show. I tried to jump, even though I'd hardly ever ridden a horse. In fact, a few weeks ago, I snuck out and tried to leap a barrier several feet high, and almost fell over backwards, instead of just simple riding like I was supposed to do after Aunt Becky gave me six weeks of riding lessons as an early Christmas gift!"[641]

Michelle raised her eyebrows. "You didn't get hurt, did you?"

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[640] "If I Were President"

[641] "Blue Ribbon Christmas"

"No, but I could have, Michelle. Don't you see?!"

"Sounds like you're yelling at yourself well enough." I rolled my eyes. "Come on, Steph, I could never scream at you. Even when we argue a little, it's just like you and D.J. used to a few times. We're just quiet with each other more than anything. And the time or two I peeked in your diary, you just got back at me by having Nicky, Alex, or some other kid get after my stuff. "

I threw up my hands. "Come on, this has been on my mind for weeks now. If you won't do it for yourself, do it for Samantha! Tell me how I'm like her mother and how sad she'd have been if I'd broken my neck, when I went out and only Allie was there to watch just in case I got hurt! "

"You mean something like, 'Think how scared she'd be if you walked around without your head attached?'"

"Okay, that's fine," I ranted, throwing up my hands. "If you have to make jokes at least give me some of your blunt, stinging remarks like you would with Samantha a few years ago. Come on, go ahead, let me have it!" Dad entered and asked if everything was all right. "Oh, we're fine; we're just rehearsing for a play."

"It sounds like a loud one," he commented. However, he also bought it, something that was quite common with him.

Once he left, Michelle said, "Where were we?"

"You were about to scream at me because I almost had to walk around without a head." She might have been joking, but the way she was acting, I figured this was as good as I'd get.

"Okay…Yeah, you could have walked around without a head. Then you could never help Samantha or me, because you wouldn't have your brain attached," Michelle joked. She wasn't totally into it, but she was getting there.

"Right, and then there's your accident, and how scared I was!"

Getting a tad feisty, Michelle remarked, "Yeah, you said you were really scared!"

"Right, think how scared you'd have been! That's why I kept telling myself not to fall, because I remembered that!"

"So why did you try in the first place?" Michelle asked more than shouted.

"Right, that's it, just give it more feeling."

"Oh. How's this? 'Why did you try it in the first place?!'"

"Perfect…"

"…In fact, why didn't you just go straight to rodeo classes while you were at it, and try to ride a bull!"

"Wow, that was good," I complimented her, not realizing the roll I'd put her on. It was just like the roll she'd been on when lecturing Rachel last spring. Rachel almost got involved with a renegade Flamingo who was into some very dangerous stuff.

"You've got a very bad attitude!" Michelle hollered. "Trying to do what you know gave me a concussion just eighteen months ago, just to show off for some boy?" She put her hands on her hips. "What good are they if you think you have to do dumb stuff to impress them? Isn't that what you always tell me about friends?!"

I normally accepted correction very easily, But it was tough getting used to Michelle doing it - especially in the manner I'd told her - when just a second ago she seemed unwilling. "Whoa, take it easy. It was just little kids doing the simple riding, and I thought I should be on a higher level…"

"Would you rather have been with Uncle Joey watching cartoons?! He's not just a little kid, and it's okay for him! Maybe I should ground you so you can appreciate how fun it is to do that 'little kid' stuff."

"Uh, Michelle…"

"And, what about Samantha, and how we've tried to steer her right? Don't you know how it would break her heart to see you hurt?" Michelle was quickly away from screaming, and into simple, tearful pleading, just as she had done with Rachel one time. I was getting kind of teary, too, thinking about that part. "Steph, if you ever try something that dangerous again…!"

She didn't know what to do, so she simply stopped and stared. Then, she ran at me with outstretched arms, and we hugged mightily.

"Don't ever do anything like that again, Steph. Please!"

"I won't, I promise. I'm sorry, Michelle. I really am," I said sincerely.

After a few moments of hugging, she looked at me and asked, "Was that good?"

"Perfect. Just what I deserved. I think."

"Steph?" I cocked my head slightly. "I hope I don't have to give anyone what they deserve anymore. I don't like it when people have to get what they deserve when it's that tough," she said mournfully. She had clearly hated hollering like that.

"Michelle, you have a warm, tender, and compassionate heart. Just like Dad, D.J., and all of us. You know how to show kids you'll always love them, so they know you mean it. I bet you'll find a way to correct the kids you watch years from now without being really tough - just like when you suggested those fwaps that one time."

"I hope so; I can't imagine even giving fwaps; you guys never thought about it."

"Okay, but just remember, Michelle, sometimes you have to give a lecture like that earlier to avoid having to react in a much tougher way later."

"Okay." As we left the room, she asked me, "Was this a test to show me what else I'll have to put up with, like when you made me do diapers and stuff?"

I mussed her hair a little and said, "Let's just say I haven't lectured like that while serving as an official babysitter, since Samantha really started getting better." I left out a time when one of her classmates had been caught setting off fireworks and I got very excited; that was a Mount Stephanie then. "But, if nothing else, if you want to watch kids for a living, as a teacher or even a home daycare provider, you better be willing to be tough, at least when it comes to lectures. After all, one day Kimmy might have kids, and drop them off for you. I hate to think how her kids will be, with how lazy she is at some things," I admitted. "Remember when she let Nicky and Alex finger-painted all over everything while we were at Uncle Jesse's graduation?"[642]

"Good point, Steph," she said as we went downstairs.

Samantha - Jan. 1, 1997 – Talk about hobbies:

The Tanners kept sending Papouli videos of ads I was in, recitals, soccer games, everything. He was thrilled to come and spend New Year's with us. I had time off from all my stuff, and we had lots of fun. He even got to celebrate something else with us. Victor, Michelle's classmate, was on the travelling All-Star team with me this year, though next year he was in a higher age braket. He and his family had learned English well, and would become citizens soon! We were all so excited!

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[642] They wouldn't take the subway in the Book Universe, but Kimmy would still be there

I'd spent lots of time preparing for ballet, and also practicing for the All-Star team, where we'd travel around the country; I'd win even more trophies for that these next couple years. Papouli entertained us with talk of Olympic performers he knew. He also advised me that I didn't have to make any activities my whole life. These performers had families, friends, and even hobbies.

"Hobbies? That's hard to believe," I responded as he told me of several such people. "I mean, I'd like to be class president, but I'm worried I can't even do that if I really want to be a ballerina. Or be an All-Star at soccer again next year."

He strengthened my resolve with the following story. "Back in Pompadoris, I knew two men in my youth who each worked very hard to make the 1932 Olympics. They spent years perfecting one move - running a lap, and then passing the baton."

I nodded slowly, grinning ear to ear as I listened to the man I really considered to be my only grandparent - Michelle's dad's mom was nice, but not around nearly enough. She baked great stuff, but so did Mr. Tanner.

"The first man took six months off to help a sick child in the middle of his training regiment, though he still tried to run a little each day. The other man continued training until he wore himself out, taking no time off for anything but the essentials. The day of the Olympic trials, the man who had to take six months off won a spot on the team, and went to the Olympics. However, the other man dropped the baton making the handoff, and failed to make the Olympic team."

He explained that the first man had what's called muscle memory. He was no doctor, but he knew enough to know that once that man practiced, it stayed with him, even if he took some time off. The other man had done too much practicing, and became overconfident and burned out.

The lesson, he explained, was that I needed to take time for myself when it came to dance, soccer, everything. I also needed to continue feeling confident about myself, but not too confident. I didn't want to get like Rachel.

Stephanie and even Michelle enforced limits on me as well, and made sure I didn't overdo things. However, it was much more fun to have Papouli explain things.

D.J. – Getting closer to Steve:

I arrived back from a ski trip with friends just in time for Papouli's arrival on the last day of the old year. Steve and I were good friends, but that was all, although we could feel things rekindling in Squaw Valley.

I didn't want to take it too fast. I'd put things off for years because I was a mother figure to Stephanie and Michelle. They looked to me for advice. I loved opportunities, even in college, to help, as they regarded my voice as one of authority.[643]

But, while Steve and I built a better relationship, trying hard to make it work by being more open and talking about deeper things, I still took it easy. Steve was willing to go however fast I wished. He had the extermination business with Grandpa Nick, after all. I was thankful for that. But, Steve was still at our house a lot.[644]

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[643] "There's Gold In My Backyard," as mentioned earlier. Also, "No Rules Weekend," and at least a few other books, D.J. is an authority figure who they obey; in one D.J. is in charge of cleaning and stuff while Danny travels. Plus, D.J. is more insistent and protective than TV D.J. would be of Stephanie in "The Story On Older Boys" and "Phone Call From A Flamingo," and of Michelle when she tells her Steph is just teasing in "Dear Michelle, I've Got Bunny Business."

[644] "How To Hide A Horse" – Only book to mention this

I still wanted children, but years from now, not right away. I planned to go into nursing, spend time doing that, and travel. However, I wouldn't mind if Steve and I got back together on a full-time basis, either. And, starting here, we sort of were.

Michelle – Apr. 27, 1997 – Soccer and Horse Jumping:

I won a horse jumping contest today, and then we got on a plane to fly to San Diego, where Samantha was in a regional soccer tournament. Steph would have to wait till we got back to get to know a boy better who she met there.[645]

Smantha hadn't entered - she was too focused on other things - but she loved to ride in her spare time. She'd taken Papouli's advice and had plenty of free, fun stuff.

Samantha went to several soccer tournaments around the country this year and next, which helped to encourage Steph even more that she'd be fine in New York, though that would be a good deal longer, of course.

Samantha won numerous awards at these tournaments, as her athletic skills had improved greatly. Dance was her best thing, but this was fun, too.

Becky – Sat., May 25 – Kimmy Graduates Beauty School:

Even without D.J. being proactive and getting us to be nicer to Kimmy, this still would have been a proud moment. Strange, too, but that goes without saying.

Kimmy Gibbler was graduating from beauty school. As one of those who worried she might not make it out of high school, I was happy for her. She wasn't tops in this class by any means, but she wasn't last, either.

Helping her learn about her slight learning problem helped, as did her taking longer to finish. But, most importantly, it was something she loved. She could gossip about all kinds of stuff, and earn something of a living; which was important, since she and Duane were still an item. Or, at least a whatever. We were all happy for her.

Jesse – The Air Horn:

As might be expected, as Kimmy's name was called to get her diploma, her family set off several air horns. Some of you who have heard those at graduation may have wondered who would do such a thing, but I kind of figured, if anyone did it, it would be them. Of course, when asked why, they gave a typical Gibbler answer. They said they thought fireworks would be overkill. Whatever happened to applause? My bands never even had peope blowing air horns when we played.

With Easter having only been last month, of course, the girls got to talking about some important stuff. It really showed how much Samantha had grown, as well as how special it really was, despite how weird she could be at times, for Kimmy to have friends like us. You can learn a lot from circumstances sometimes.

D.J. - Challenges, and the Enpty Egg:

We had a big party for Kimmy at our house. Nicky and Alex weren't quite six,

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[645] "How To Hide A Horse" – Fan consensus is it happens here. Michelle is 10, twins are 5, and Steph's only said to be 13, when even if it was the previous year she would be 14. Small age mix-up unimportant. It's the same stables as "Michelle Rides Again." Michelle would enjoy competing several years in a row, so both are listed as competitions of hers, but this year is most likely with other boyfriends Michelle found; by now Steph wants her to check. Also important: This is the only one to mention Steve being over a lot, which implies it should be after D.J. has been in college a while.

and were just getting done with the half-day Kindergarten program. So, they didn't know a lot about challenges that people can face. But, it was great to hear the younger girls trying to help them understand Kimmy.

"She's really been a great friend for D.J.," Michelle said. The boys agreed. They'd heard how much she had done for me in the weeks after Mom died.

"How come she could do that," Nicky asked, "but she didn't know what popsicles were once?" He referred to a time she was babysitting a couple years earlier.

Alex recalled. "She thought they had to be made with soda pop."

Samantha agreed. "She can get a little silly. And, you have to help her."

"That was just from not thinking, though," Michelle assured her. "I think she could have gotten that one if she'd tried."

"Did you boys ever hear the story of the Easter eggs?" They shook their heads, so Samantha continued. "A kid with even more severe challenges than Kimmy was in a Sunday School class one day; our teacher told us this story last Easter." Michelle grinned broadly, as she remembered it, too.

Where we go?" Nicky inquired.

"No; I don't know where. Anyway, these children were given plastic Easter eggs, and told to come back next week with something inside the egg that reminded them of Easter," Samantha said. "The other kids in this class put things like flower petals, or pieces of candy, in their eggs. Some drew pictures of birds, because it's when all the pretty birds come back north after the winter."

Alex asked, "What did that one boy put in?"

"That's just it; nothing," Michelle explained.

"The other kids started laughing, and the teacher was worried; had the boy not understood what she'd said? Why would he not put anything in there? Then, she hasked him, and you know what he said?" The boys weren't sure. "He said, 'Nothing's in there, because the tomb is empty. Jesus rose from the dead.' That's the real meaning of Easter. Not all this other stuff we celebrate, but the fact that there's an empty tomb. That's the kind of stuff someone like Kimmy can get. Something important like that. When all the other people think about things, that kid thought about spiritual stuff."

Michelle walked up to me and told the story. "Didn't that boy die later?"

I said he had. "The story ended, the way I heard, with all the other kids putting empty eggs into his coffin, and knowing they'd see him again, because he'd taught them all that important lesson, too. Knowing he was a very special boy, even if he couldn't always think or talk right, and didn't look the same. Samantha doesn't like to think about that just yet; but she's a lot better than she was." I reminded her, "She's leaving for dance school in New York in just a couple weeks. She's so excited!"

Samantha - Feelings before going to dance school:

D.J. was right. I was thrilled. I had plenty of friends in dance, and a great group mother. Plus, my parents had gotten me a cell phone, back when kids never got them.

"You tell great stories," Michelle told me. "Maybe you'll be a teacher, too."

I admitted it would be fun. "I'm glad you've helped me when I wasn't being like all the other kids," I muttered thankfully.

Michelle gave me a big bear hug. "We always help each other out in our family."

"I know. I'm so glad you always pushed me to do my best," I declared.

"Just wait. You're going to be a real ballerina someday!" The others were still amazed at her confidence, but I was actually starting to believe it might be a little bit possible, anyway. The road was long, but the Tanners paved it with lots of hope.

"And, there's so much else you can do, too, "Stephanie said out of the blue.

"Remember that first song I danced to, at my first recital?" I asked. They did. "I feel like I can do anything, just because you believe in me."

"My mom calls it giving your kids wings," Becky said. "Letting them soar like egales anywhere. Kimmy might not be able to take wings as big as some people, but friends like D.J. helped her soar here. And, the boy in that story, his faith gave him wings. And, because of that faith, he was able to give his friends wings. They all realized that personal relationship because of that one empty egg. But, you've got wings to soar way beyond that."

"Aunt Becky's right. We'll miss you. But, this is your dream," Michelle said.

We hugged, as I knew we would a few more times, at least, before I left for dance school. I think they had it tougher than I did, in a way, though I'd grown so close to them. And, I felt the love they had for me, just like what God had for me. But, for all of us, it was a huge milestone. I was going to start to pursue my dream. And, I knew I hd the Tanners' unconditional love to back me up. That was all I needed to soar.

Stephanie - June 8, 1997 - Proud but tearful sendoff:

This was the day I said goodbye to Samantha for two months. My heart ached to be there with her, even though I knew her best friend from dance would be. So would her friend's mother, a nice woman who understood Samantha's situation and would be her confidant in New York. All the legal stuff had been taken care of; we'd been authorized to make decisions for her, as per the agreement with the parents after her meltdown, almost as co-guardians, really. We knew she could handle it, and with us signing all those emergency medical forms and such, we didn't have to bother her parents.

I didn't fear her running afoul of my rules - even forgetting curfew last fall had made her really sad, as once again, she proved to be very sensitive underneath the façade she'd worn during that rough period. She'd trusted Christ as Savior that night. She'd been very remorseful, but I assured her I still loved her with all my heart, and always would; something she seemed more and more willing to trust. She accepted that, and we got to talking about God's eternal love and forgiveness. Michelle had trusted Christ a few years earlier. It was great to be able to celebrate such things with her.

It was experiences like that with the curfew that led me to believe she'd stay within the rules, but still, I had pangs I couldn't quite fathom as we embraced.

I wiped tears away as we said goodbye, and she boarded the plane. I watched it soar into the air, and I couldn't believe my feelings. "Aunt Becky, it's so weird; it's almost like I was letting my own baby go."

"Steph, honey, I think you are," she told me. "You've poured your soul into that girl. You think about what she's been through, especially now that we know how lonesome those first years really felt. And, you long for her life to be absolutely perfect. It's what any parent would want; it's part of that special type of love."

"Aunt Becky's right. I was the same way with Michelle at first. I felt really sad that she didn't have a mom," Dad said.

"Yeah, except she had us, and especially D.J., while Samantha was lucky she

found you when she did. Or you found her, or…well, really, it's just one of those things where you know Somebody upstairs is organizing this, and thankfully we're listening," Uncle Jesse mused. "I always say everything happens for a reason."

"I know. I guess God was with her before, just keeping her from harm, calling out to her to keep trusting in Him, huh?"

Uncle Jesse agreed. "And, He was trying to get people to take an interest in her. I mean, like the maid, she did a little bit, anyway. And you, Stephanie Tanner, accepted that call. Just like your sister did when it came to Michelle. Only, you didn't do it at an altar, Steph. You did it where it maters, in your heart, and you've stuck to it." He pointed to my chest. "And that's the heart of someone who really cares."

I nodded slowly. "I guess that's why it hurts to see her go, huh?" I thought of how I'd comforted Michelle after nightmares a few times, even though she only forgot a couple hours around her concussion, and didn't recall the fall consciously, it was rough. Michelle didn't have many, but I was thankful to be there to help comfort her. In a way, it felt like I had felt then - a desire to be needed, to know that someone was counting on me for help. I loved being able to help, and wished more people would look around to find someone who might be hurting, and help them, too.

Maybe I was a lot more like D.J. than I thought.

Joey - Aug. 4 – Making Up with the Flamingoes:

Stephanie kept from going crazy, for one thing, because she had her own trip with her friends. Including some new friends whom she brought home with her.

"Uh, Steph, those are Flamingoes," Michelle reminded her as the group from John Muir came into the terminal. Stephanie chatted jovially with her old and new friends.

We all embraced, as the other kids did their families. Then, Stephanie explained. "I know. Not really close friends yet, but some things changed on the trip, and we really got to know each other."[646] She introduced the others. "So, how's Samantha? I've been e-mailing with her some while I was gone."

Michelle answered quickly. "Great; her recital's in two weeks, and she is so excited! She's really going to be a star."

I walked up to one of Steph's new friends. "Pleased to meet you. Want to watch me pull a rabbit out of a hat," I said in my Bullwinkle voice. When everyone looked at me strangely, I said, "Well, Steve said he thought I was strange for doing the Godfather. So, I figured this would be more normal."

"Yeah, but at least the Godfather was a person, not a moose," Jesse declared.

"It's nice to meet all you people…and mooses," Renee, the girl in question, joked a little uncomfortably after introductions were made. It would take her a while to get used to me, but Jesse had felt the same way when we moved in to help Danny.

Kimmy – Done With Community College:

This was close to the time Tommy would meet Kathy. Even with trying to protect

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[646] The last Club Stephanie series has them becoming friends at the end, though not close yet. This would be expected. However, "He's the One" mentions Steph's need for a new school ID, so they're still at John Muir, meaning before ninth grade. Since there are numerous trilogies, however, combining aspects is best.

This is what likely happens: One incident occurs over spring break her 8th grade year; possibly one the summer between 8th and 9th; and, finally, Stephanie meeting a boy after 9th the same way D.J. did. In a way, it's merging parts of many into canon, and not explaining where the trip was for certain.

Samantha, I'd tried to keep tabs on Kathy; I held out hope that things could get better, and they did. College wasn't that hot, though.

With D.J. at San Francisco State instead of California University, I was already helping her with volunteering. It felt a lot like high school. I didn't run inot the people who might have helped me think about a really fancy business like party planning. So, instead, I decided it might be better to just open my own salon.

That would still be a business, of course, The difference was that I wouldn't have to put any brains behind actually organizing things. Any business is hard to run on your own, and I sure needed the help, since I couldn't keep a job otherwise. However, I probably got lazy – or is it that I stayed lazy? Either way, Duane and I were falling in love – or whatever – and that's what mattered.

Danny – Field trips and then some, plus a special trip to see Samantha:

It seemed like too short a time ago the girls were little and a chocolate factory was the highlight of the year. Now, the field trips were so much grander.

Steph had returned from Europe with the same sort of excitement D.J. had had, but while she'd met a boy, Steph told us more about how exciting the trip was than D.J. had. I think the fact she made up with the Flamingoes helped. She didn't have one thing to focus on while there. She'd told us they were cordial, but Michelle never expected them to act like friends, not after Steph's warnings about them.

Michelle always enjoyed staying a bit closer to home, maybe because of the D.J. influence. She enjoyed Washington D.C. the most a few years later, though she liked traveling to Greece, too, with the family when we did it once. I suspect she'd have enjoyed traveling outside the U.S. more with more Jesse in her.

We each traveled a number of times, of course, to see Samantha perform, as well as to visit my mom. The first was to New York later this month, but we took other trips, too. We stayed in this hemisphere except for one time. The girls weren't as much into history and things like that as I had been. Stephanie might have been most. As for learning about other cultures, you could get some of that in San Francisco. It was still lots of fun, though, when we traveled to Greece in the summer of 2006. She even got to perform in Russia, which was very different from when Victor and his family had left; they were still able to help her some on the culture, though.

Samantha had been performing ballet there, too. It was lots of fun for all of us, and the girls enjoyed the culture and all the other fun things. None of us spoke Greek well, but being friends of the ballet company, we were able to find good interpreters. The girls had more fun there than on any of their field trips.

Samantha loved to travel as long as she was with someone; she would always hate being alone. She loved to travel more through writing; she became a successful childrens' book author with her future husband. Steph was glad to see things like that coming to the forefront, so she'd be sure to have something worthwhile to pursue after her ballet career was over; most ballerinas are done by age 25, the older ones at 30. It takes a lot more effort and energy than it looks like just watching it from the audience.

Samantha - Aug. 18:

Dance school was tiring, but wonderful. Stephanie and Courtney and their whole families came to New York to see me perform; it was a fabulous vacation for them.

Mr. Tanner saw his old girlfriend, Vicki. When they broke up, I still had lots of problems. Vicki was very glad to see how far I'd come. They decided there was nothing more between them, but at least she got to see what had become of me.

Sadly, that felt like a high water mark for a while. I didn't do as many ads after I'd begun dancing, and while I also performed in plays, several rough things happened.

Michelle - Oct. 6, 1997:

One of the kids who tried to frame Samantha for stuff after her Kindergarten year, when she started getting better, was a girl named Emily. She still harbored bad blood toward her because of some things Samantha had done in Kindergarten, such as treating the goldfish Emily brought for show and tell like a football.

The school had begun the experiment with class presidencies a couple years ago, and like it so much they now held the elections in early October. Emily opposed Samantha for the class presidency, and tried to cheat.

The new PA, a girl named Kiersten, insisted upon a meeting between the two candidates. She asked Steph, Missy, and Mandy to come, too, to help her sort things out. She was good at getting people to talk to each other, but Emily would be a tough case to crack. Still, her skill at peer mediation, which was a trend in schools in many parts of the nation, aided quite a bit.

A cooling off period of several weeks was ordered, after which Samantha easily won a rematch. Emily had lost all her supporters with how it was revealed she handled things. However, despite how much she enjoyed her position, next year would bring other problems, because of the new school.

Jesse - Nov. 10 – Papouli's death:

Papouli might have passed away soon after his wife under normal circumstances; maybe even with that pacemaker. However, he'd come early, and possibly he lived longer because he felt he had someone to live for, too. Someone who needed him. It doesn't always happen that way, but sometimes that can add a few years.

It won't add forever, though. He died in his sleep in late October, soon after having written telling Samantha how excited he'd been to get that video of her recital. We got the card today, the day I came back from Greece and his funeral. All the Greek family was there except for Stavros, who was sadly serving time for some shady stuff.

Samantha begged Stephanie to let her go to the funeral. But, truth be told, we didn't have enough money for Becky, me, and the boys to all go, and it seemed easiest for just me to fly way out to Greece.

Stephanie also nixed the idea because of school; now that Samantha was finally the rightful class president, she had those duties plus homework and everything.

Stephanie – Sat., Nov. 14 – D.J. and Kathy's friendship resurrected:

The call a few days ago had been like any other. Our baby-sitting business was going very well, and it figured that word would spread.

However, I recognized the voice. I considered the term D.J. had used for her four years earlier.[647] I knew she had just been protecting me, but still, it was very tempting to

[647] Considering this was before D.J. knew what the Flamingoes were trying to get Steph to do, contrasted with her friendly demeanor toward Kathy as they leave for the shower in the episode "The Apartment,"

let Allie or Darcy handle it.

Then again, they'd been bugged by the Flamingoes just like I had. After talking it over with several family members, I decided that I'd go.

Kathy Santoni opened the door in the very modest, but not really run-down, house. "Hi," I said, instantly making eye contact with four-year-old Scott as well as his single mother. "I'm Stephanie."

"Probably still wondering if I got the right Stephanie, huh?" We chuckled as Kathy beckoned me into the house and introduced me to her boy, Scott.

"I'm sure a lot's changed in four years."

She smiled sadly. "I don't know if you know, but maybe you can understand, how I've tried to protect Scott. I'd never let any man come near me that could hurt him. My life changed so dramatically, and…well…I guess I understand a little about D.J.."

I concurred. To lighten the mood a bit, I walked over to the toy cars Scott was parking neatly like a parking lot. I took one and quipped, "Here, to make a realistic parking lot you need at least one car taking up two or more spaces." I placed it in a very disorderly fashion compared to the rest.

"Why would you want it to park like Mommy?"

Scott's query lightened it a lot more than I'd planned, but that was okay. "He's just like you, Stephanie, back when we'd call you 'Motormouth Tanner.' Even if I had anything to hide, it wouldn't be hidden after you spent time with him."

"I'm sure. Look, I hope you don't mind, I don't even want to think about asking if you were behind the Flamingoes that first time…"

"No, no, I understand. It's probably not something D.J. cares to bring up, either. I just wanted to call you because I'd heard you'd been baby-sitting for a while, and, well, I kind of wondered…"

"What D.J. would think?" She nodded. "Well, as you probably know, the Flamingoes and I are closer now, not great friends but still a lot friendlier than we were. I think she knows things can change."

"It's been a real struggle. I promise I won't use her or anyone in a mean or unfair way if we get back together."

"I know." If it had just been me, I would have jumped right back into being friends; Darcy and I had after arguing over boys a number of times. I sensed D.J. might have more trouble, though once when Kathy was in the hospital with appendicitis she'd sent her a card. D.J. had told me that it was up to Kathy to make the next move. So, a fair amount of the worry was Kathy's.

We arranged for D.J. to come over and talk, and within a few weeks, while we were getting our new bedroom suites delivered - with D.J. moving up to the attic and me finally getting my own room – Kathy was over with her boy. While she worked with all of us, he played with Nicky and Alex. And, D.J. and Kathy enjoyed talking and reminiscing as they helped us move the furniture.

D.J. – Sat., Dec. 19 – Too protective in retrospect, learning her lesson:

It hadn't just been the Flamingoes, but Kathy's behavior in general, that had led me to cut ties. I might not have been as tough if I hadn't been the mother figure, and Kathy recognized that. However, the Flamingo situation certainly prevented me from

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another sign of D.J. being like a mother for her sisters.

even keeping in touch once the baby was born. This was especially because they caused Stephanie problems even after trying unsuccessfully to get Dad's phone card.

Kathy had been nice – she'd offered her help when she read in the paper about Michelle's injury at the jumping contest. I'd thanked her in a casual, but not too friendly, way, and that was it. I think she sensed that the time wasn't right yet.

Now, however, with the Flamingoes no longer a threat to my sister, Kathy had decided that a truce might be possible. She was right. With college classes over for the semester, I had some free time, and could really evaluate things. And, I decided that I'd been a bit too much like Dad in his protectiveness.

In a way, it was good; if she'd been coming over a lot and still kept going around with different guys it would have been a horrible influence, especially for Michelle, who was still impressionable then, and Samantha.

However, I could have acted short of cutting off all contact, save for what Kimmy told me. I could have talked on the phone with her, or visited her once or twice. And, I might have kept some contact, but the Flamingo thing was the last straw.

That was a shame, because she'd really needed help. She wouldn't say, but I suspected she'd been on welfare for a time, though she was working now. In fact, she'd called Steph to baby-sit that day because she had a job interview. She could have used guidance as far as raising kids, too. Baby-sitting help was also an important commodity for her. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, she needed someone to talk to quite a bit those first years. I should have done something, at least being willing to go over to her house, though I might have gotten too upset with her, too, because of those Flamingoes. So, at least things hadn't been said out of frustration there.

What was important now was that we were friends again. And, we were having fun laughing about Michelle, who seemed to be the exact opposite of boy crazy Kathy. The boy she'd been friends with for so long occupied her mind enough she called half the players "Jeff" at a football game this season, and Jeff never played football. It would be great if she stayed with only one for her whole life.

For the second straight year, Samantha had made the all-star team, too, where she would continue to win awards, though this would be the height of her soccer play. She'd be on teams the next couple years, too, though, before it became just a fun pastime like her horseback riding, trips to the mall, and all the other things kids do.

Stephanie – Learning to drive:

D.J. was always such a great help. I think she performed the role of mother perfectly; especially in teaching me how to drive. She knew how tough it had been for Dad and Uncle Jesse – she would have taught me a little, anyway, and I'd teach Michelle, though Dad was good enough now not to get too antsy. I think either way, he would have helped both of us the amount he did. Joey and I taught Samantha.

D.J. made me promise that as long as we didn't go near any kitchens, she'd do it. It had felt strange to be behind the wheel again at first, but by now I was used to practicing, and anticipated a fabulous Sweet Sixteen a few weeks after Christmas break.

My biggest surprise would come a few days after my birthday, though.

Danny - Dec. 24:

Instead of us all going to Greece for the funeral, Steph, Michelle, Samantha, and I

flew to my mom's in Connecticut for Christmas; D.J. was skiing. Michelle was very close to her because of the time spent before she left for Connecticut, plus visits we'd made each way. Samantha had only met her a couple times, however.

The visit didn't end the hurt - Samantha still felt bad having lost a "grandparent." Still, even that wasn't a huge problem, because Steph and Michelle were so experienced at talking about what it was like not having Pam around. Joey had helped, too, back home, as he had been a real blessing with the girls after Pam died. He was engaged now, but even after he moved out, he would always be very special to Samantha.

Of course, sledding, building snowmen, and lots of other typical New England winter activities certainly helped, too.

Joey – Friendship with the maid:

The Burkes' maid had retired at the end of this year, after a little over forty years in the family's employ. She was glad to be able to keep up with Samantha now, as everything seemed to be going well. Jean tried as best she could, too, but she wasn't as able to with her health; she passed away a couple years later.

While the maid had done her best to bond with Samantha, there was nothing like a maternal bond. Same with jean; we went to the calling hours, but that was it. Things got way too busy for the maid, and she'd had health problems that kept her away and limited her time when she came back. Even if she'd wanted to take time to run all around and interact with a toddler or preschooler, she couldn't have.

Now, however, the maid would be able to attend some of Samantha's recitals, and at least maintain something of a friendship with Samantha. It wasn't really close, and Samantha was a little worried at first that seeing the maid at her recitals or plays would make her think about all those lonely feelings in her youth. It didn't, though. In fact, it might have paved the way, over twenty years later, for her to finally reconcile with her biological mom, after her biological dad died.

The maid didn't live to see that. However, she survived long enough to see Samantha's first performance as a professional ballerina. She died happy that her small efforts had at least been enough to allow Samantha to bond with Stephanie as a real mother figure. Samantha saw the maid as a distant, elderly friend, but didn't feel very close by that point, just like she had Jean, who could at least be happy that Samantha was on her way to great success.

As for Steph, a month after this Christmas, she got a very pleasant reward herself for her work to that point, and confirmation that she really was a grown-up in some ways.

Stephanie - Jan. 28, 1998 - An Official Title:

Concerns about the new school could wait for now. I'd just celebrated my Sweet Sixteen in great style. We'd had the most fabulous party, I'd received wonderful presents, and I enjoyed celebrating the fact we'd gotten Samantha almost completely through grade school. As Dad said at the party, "She may have been intended as their trophy, but you're walking away with all the honors."

I thought those were only being gathered up above, until today.

"Mail call," Michelle hollered.

D.J.'s friend/boyfriend, Steve, and she came in the back door while I casually walked downstairs. Steve was munching on an apple as he watched Michelle bring the

mail into the kitchen and sort it. "Any good grocery coupons in there?" Steve inquired.

"No, but here, Steph, there's something from Samantha's parents. Maybe they remembered your birthday a little late."

I smiled at Michelle and spoke with a sigh. "If that's the case, it'll be a card wishing me happy eleventh, not Happy Sweet Sixteen. And they're further behind on everything for their daughter," I said as I pulled out a letter. I was still quite curious, and began reading instantly.

I held the slip of paper out that was inside it, not really paying attention to it. What was in the letter was probably more interesting, I figured. I couldn't believe they'd taken the time to write anything.

Steve glanced at the slip - it was a check made out to me. As my jaw dropped while reading, he spouted, "Wow, I haven't seen that many O's since my last trip to the doughnut shop. Hey, Mr. Tanner, do you have any doughnuts?" he asked as Dad walked into the kitchen.

"No, sorry...what is it, Steph?"

"I'm...read this!" I glared at the check, then pinched myself. I was awake.

"Whoa, Steph, you're a nanny now! Congratulations!" Dad gave me a great big hug, then went back to reading. "Whoa, baby! You get how much every week?!"

I sat down slowly. Dozens of images swirled in my mind. My first meeting with Samantha, back when she was known as Sam. The heartache of trying to get her to obey rules. The love I showered upon her. The talks we'd had about how she needed someone who cared. The attempts to build a huge network of people to keep Sam in line, then to watch out for her as Samantha; well, and keep her safe. The celebrations of her successes and consoling her on her failures when my family, friends, and I were the only ones around to do so. The only ones, because the parents just didn't care.

And then? The thought of having a job - the babysitting business was small potatoes compared to this. What had been my biggest paycheck before? Since we split the earnings, probably one Christmas break. We'd watched four kids while the parents worked - the second straight year we'd done so for that family.[648] I'd made a bit more that week than I'd made watching Sam alone once when she was seven; I was bold enough to demand what then was a huge wad of money for watching Sam.

I was less bold now, but as I gathered my thoughts, I knew I'd earned it. And, they obviously remembered, because the figure on that letter… it was what highly experienced nannies made! Wasn't it? Even if it was just a family choosing to spend a lot, this was still incredible. As the letter had said, now that I was sixteen and could hold a "steady job," I could officially be considered to be their nanny. But...this much?

Dad continued to ramble as I held my head, still speechless at getting so much to do something I'd grown to love. "Wow, I'll have to talk to my accountant, you might even have to file income taxes next year, Steph. Boy, you're really going to be raking in some dough - do you know how much this is a year?"

"Let me see." Michelle peeked at the check, then hugged and congratulated me.

Finally able to get some words out, I stammered, "Thanks. This…represents so much hard work. It's the kind of reward for helping I only thought I'd see when I reached Heaven." I sighed again. "I guess if they don't know anything about non-monetary rewards, though, it makes sense, huh?"

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[648] "My Ho-Ho-Horrible Christmas"

D.J. glanced at the letter, as Dad ran for his video camera - he had to tape this scene before we went to the bank.

D.J. concurred, "They might not know about the best things in life, the ones that are free. But, boy, they sure know how to pay people for things."

I nodded slowly. They knew how to repay hard work. Indeed, they promised to send something as payment for my years as an unofficial nanny. Whether that dated from when Samantha was five, when she was seven and her parents gave me permission to revoke privileges, when they first called me one as a ruse, or whenever, it would be a lot.

I wished they would spend time with people, rather than with their careers. But, at least now, I wouldn't have to worry about summer jobs, though I'd still baby-sit other kids. I wasn't having much trouble with Samantha. But, it was still good to keep an eye on Samantha, at least through others. The preteen years could provide plenty of problems, after all, and when she was a teen…that thought rattled me a bit.

But, that's why Michelle and her friends were such big helps. As were Allie and Darcy – I'd have to borrow Dad's cell phone and call them on the way to the bank, I was way too excited. I couldn't think about the pressure now - pressure was when Sam was five and I had to keep her from destroying the school at times. Now, there was no pressure per se. It was just watching Samantha grow, and using that network to help Stephanie be the best Mom-like figure she could be.

As Dad filmed me holding the check and spoke about it, I gazed up to Heaven through the kitchen window. I could just picture Mom smiling back as I kept saying, "I'm a nanny. I'm a nanny."

As the sun shone brightly through the windows, I could just imagine Mom's voice, echoing those around her as they declared their pride in how I'd helped Samantha.

XII: MOM IS WHERE THE HEART IS: Jan. 1998-
1. Family Foundation: Jan. 1998-June, 2000
Danny – Feb. 1, 1998:

Steph's official title went well with her babysitting work. Of course, she was so much more than just a nanny. They were paying her what a very experienced one would earn. Not that she wasn't experienced, of course. This let them write it off; they had to account for it because she didn't stay there, so they couldn't claim her as a dependent on their taxes. Samantha spent her time over at our place or the Larkins' anyway.

This made Steph and Michelle having separate rooms especially nice, because three to a bedroom was a bit crowded before. Samantha was getting big, though still really just the size of Michelle a couple years earlier.

There was one thing she was a bit old for - being a flower girl. Steph and Joey had taken her to the salon to have her ears pierced at the same time as Michelle on Michelle's last birthday. Steph was younger than Samantha and a bridesmaid at Jesse and Becky's wedding. Still, she was offered the role of flower girl in Joey's wedding.

D.J.:

Michelle tried to encourage Samantha to do it, even though Suzie had a girl – Wendy – who was a more normal age for a flower girl. I think Michelle was starting to realize, in helping Stephanie baby-sit, what all babies and little kids needed, and she wanted more and more to help Samantha capture some of that happy childhood.

Eventually, Samantha went along with Stephanie and Michelle, and was a flower girl with Wendy. It was another time where I thought they went too far in babying her, but I was starting to recognize they might be doing the right thing. As the August wedding neared, I could tell she really wanted to stay little, and was struggling with thoughts of going to a new school and approaching adolescence.

Kimmy – Apr. 17 - Samanhtha helps Jimmy with cream spinach, ice cream:

Steph hadn't had much chance to babysit Jimmy – without her business she might have played guitar and stuff a bit for him, for instance. However, she had a little, and had taught Samantha how to care for others.

This showed when Jimmy was in Kindergarten one day. D.J. had broken this fact to me gently when we were five or six. Jimmy learned the hard way, though – especially with how kids can laugh. It led to a fit; he marched around on the playground after school with paper and a crayon from his school box. He was clearly upset.[649]

"Hi," Samantha said as she saw him on the playground. "you're Jimmy, right? What's wrong?" she asked kindly.

"I need you to exit this petition!" He'd heard about petitions from me. He knew you get a bunch of people to sign so things can happen.

"'Exit' it?" She looked confused for a moment – D.J. and I were watching, as we were going to pick them up that day. "Jimmy… do you know what an exit is?"

"Yeah. You put it on a petition."

"Uh, no. See.." I could tell she was trying not to giggle. "Jimmy, an exit is a sign

[649] In the series "Fuller House," Jimmy said he was really upset when he learned cream spinch wasn't ice cream. He could have become more upset in NetU without this intervention, but also, he's very gentle and easygoing, so "really upset" to him might seem quite mild to others.

that says where to go out. Here, I'll show you." She took him by the hand and led him just inside the door they'd come out of, and showed him what it said as D.J. and I walked toward them. Then, they came back out. "That's the exit."

"He might mean to literally 'x' it. Put your 'x' on it," D.J. suggested.

Samantha brightened. "Oh, okay. What's the petition for?"

Joey:

She took and read it. It said, "Fire them for saying cream spinach is ice cream." He'd clearly had help with the spelling. Somewhere, a teacher was probably confused, yet chalking it up to one of those weird things kids do for no reason. She might have thought to ask if there was a problem if it had made any sense, but it didn't. At least, it wasn't the type of thing most parents would do.

The Gibblers weren't most parents, though. Jimmy had kind of kept his cool, but was getting more upset as the day went on, till now.

Samantha also got confused as he spoke further.

D.J.:

Before I could mention that I'd helped Kimmy with this when we were his age, Jimmy through a monkey wrench into things.

"Deer crossing!"

"What?" Samantha looked at Jimmy like he had two heads. She looked around. "There aren't any deer… Jimmy, I'm confused. What do you mean?"

"I changed my mind. That's the sign I want you to put."

Samantha raised a finger, held her mouth open, and clearly tried to think. "Wait… wait. So, you knew an 'exit' was a sign, and you wanted me…"

"To sign the petition," Jimmy insisted.

At this point, I had to provide at least a little clarity. "I think Jimmy just learned creamed spinach isn't ice cream. I had to tell Kimmy that at his age, too."

Samantha put an arm around Jimmy. The fifth grader told the Kindergartener, "I'm sorry your parents are so weird sometimes. But, now that you know what ice cream is, you should just enjoy it and not worry about the past." They were clearly words she told herself sometimes about the love we showed. I could just as easily hear her saying that about family with us, how she enjoyed us now.

"They lied. And the other kids laughed."

I decided to see how Samantha handled it. She remembered some things from when Steph had helped her, though I was ready to step in, too. The PA, Kiersten was also coming by this time, as she'd heard there was a problem.

"It's no fun when kids laugh, but…" She saw Kiersten and felt more comfortable asking her fellow fifth grader for help. "Kids were laughing at Jimmy because he thought cream spinach was ice cream."

"That's no fun to get laughed at, is it. But, we all do or think funny things. You know how you get a dog license so you can have a dog? I saw 'dog license on my mom's 'to do' list when I was seven and asked, 'Do dogs drive?'" When he chuckled, she added, "See, I can laugh at myself now, too. It was silly, my older siblings were getting drivers' licenses and that was my first thought. When we do something like that, we should just remember we're human and enjoy it."

"Okay… but my mom and dad lied."

"Wait… they told you…?"

I explained. "Kimmy had that happen, too. I was able to break it to her more gently at his age. They didn't want him craving ice cream all the time, I guess."

"Or they might have been joking and you took it literally. I have family that joke around like that, too." Kiersten was kindly side-stepping the Gibblers' strangeness. "But, you can go home and tell them you know now, and you can enjoy it as a nice treat when you behave well, or whaever their rules are."

We each offered suggestions on how to handle it, Jimmy promised to forgive them, and everything was fine. Well, except for the signing part.

"You know, when you want someone to sign something, that means to put their name on it, not a real sign," Samantha explained.

"Oh. Boy, there's so much to learn here," Jimmy proclaimed.

"Yeah. But, that's the best part," I finally encouraged him.

Stephanie:

I was proud of Samantha for trying to help. She really was an uberMichelle with her blunt remarks, yet she was learning to be so kind and polite, too.

Jimmy quickly made up with his parents, and they probably lamented a little the days when he wouldn't want ice cream. It was an unusual family. Jimmy didn't interact with us much, but we were glad for when we'd helped.

Kimmy – Why their situation not as rough:

See, our parents interacted with us. In fact,t hey interacted more with Jimmy at times, it seemed. Eventually, they just took him on all their trips. Samantha had never had much – if any – interaction with her parents.

It didn't matter how weird it got, at least they were there. It's just that after a while, once Garth and I got old enough, we were on our own, to find friends wherever we could. I'm so glad D.J. found me. I think they realized by the time they had Jimmy they needed to have a permanent sitter for him, too, so they got one. But, he went with them on their world travels, too, at times. It's how he got so good at photography.

Becky – Sat., July 26 – Samantha's Struggles with Growing:

Samantha had originally been told she could help Steph baby-sit when she was twelve. However, Stephanie could tell one thing was bothering her about growing up. Samantha was trying very hard not to think about going to Middle School. Stephanie and Michelle were babysitting several kids anyway, so Steph let Samantha help, just to take her mind off things. Samantha still felt edgy, though, and wouldn't do much for a while – nor would she baby-sit by herself for a couple years. By thirteen she was comfortable with kids she knew who were well-behaved, like Wendy.

Two things concerned her a lot, and one existed under the surface. She wanted the freedom of being a kid. That was what was lurking underneath. Her two biggest problems were these. First, would all those thoughts of when she "ran away" return when she went to John Muir Middle School? If so, that would lead to thinking about how incredibly lonely she had been, and how much anger and frustration were inside, before she met Stephanie. Second, how would her size and lack of development affect things? Some of

the girls would look so much older. That's one reason why she was so glad Stephanie had taken her to get her ears pierced.

Both of these, however, were heightened by a sense that Middle School meant suddenly leaving that comfort zone where she was cared for and loved, and where she'd really grown attached to everything. Which goes back to how she'd had barely enough attachment as a baby and toddler.

Jesse – Analyzing Samantha's mindset:

To understand why this was even more of a problem for Samantha, a little explanation of her psyche is in order.

See, Samantha had bonded with a mother figure and even had some limits her first year or two of life – that's what let her bond with Steph so fast. The maid had never enforced limits with timeout or anything – but she'd had limits like the daycare workers had for her at that age. For instance, the maid might have kept her from getting into cleaning products. That just took a "no" from the maid, and a wagging finger, and then the baby Samantha would feel bad. Then the maid would rebond with her, and she'd learn that someone could correct her and still love her. Jean had helped there, too.

Okay, now me, I was a rebel from the word "go." If someone told me "no," I didn't care sometimes, I went ahead and did it. Samantha was different, though. She listened to the maid and the daycare workers as a young toddler. Her personality was that she would feel shame at correction pretty fast.

Her problem was, the maid was too busy to chase a two-year-old everywhere, Jean too swamped, and other daycare workers kept changing. While she maintained the concept that being corrected could mean the person loved her, other emotional needs were ignored so much that she got too angry and bitter, feeling she had to fend for herself. She was looking for that love, but didn't know how to find it.

Stephanie emerged as the one she turned to, because she took the time to cuddle and talk and discipline. It's as if she was picking up where things had left off at eighteen to twenty-four months. That's when Samantha started to get into lots of stuff and it was too difficult for the maid or – eventually – the daycare workers to handle. Although, unlike the maid the daycare workers enforced timeouts and such, so she was less of a handful for them for a few years.

By that point, enough had been done earlier to allow Samantha to see someone as a mother figure. But, it wasn't enough, till Stephanie came along, to permit her to grasp who that was. Because of the neglect, Samantha needed lots of encouragement and consistency in her life. She needed to be really sure of people, and later would be very cautious about who she had helping her children and teaching them.

That brings us to middle school. Samantha was used to Stephanie. But, moving up to a new school meant something radically different socially. More than most, she began to wonder where she fit in. She had an identity now, but what she really longed for was to be "Stephanie's little girl" for the rest of her life.

She was way more capable than she might have been of functioning as an adult – unlike Joey, who slipped into cartoons and stuff and stayed there for years for the most part when things got too stressful. However, she had to be very careful of anything that would remind her of those lonely feelings back when she was a kid.

Stephanie – Tues., Aug. 25 – Samantha's first day of middle school:

Michelle and Courtney would be there for her, which helped a lot. Still, if she hadn't been so scared of losing him, Samantha would have brought Mr. Snuggle Bunny with her. As it was, that old phone booth from when the now-refurbished John Muir was still Van Atta found use again. It had been where my friends and I always met before middle school, and where D.J. had hid that first day.

Those feelings of being unlovable, in a way, had started to come back as she wandered the much larger halls. I'd talked with the lady who would be her guidance counselor, and we'd made sure she had friends in a few classes and at lunch. However, the vastly different atmosphere, and memories of why she'd fled school one day years ago, resurfaced as she ducked into the phone booth to eat.

Michelle – Jeff's Sweet Side:

I loved funny stuff, and the boy who provided so much at times was about to show off again. This time, as he hid, he prepared to demonstrate his charming side, too, the side that showed he really cared about other people. And, about me, in a way – he knew Samantha weighed heavily on my mind at times.

"Pssst," he whispered where Samantha couldn't see him in her phone booth. "Did you see a blue shirt with a red 'S' on it and a cape in there? No questions," he finished as if he was trying to hide a secret identity. He'd begun to follow Courtney and me to look for Samantha, when Courtney mentioned that Samantha should be with us. But, then he'd recalled my story about D.J., and scurried over to the phone booth.

Samantha began giggling, and almost spilled some of her juice. "I can see why Michelle likes you," she told him.

"Samantha," Courtney asked, "What are you doing in there?"

"Laughing at Jeff." It was the truth, and she didn't have to explain her feelings.

"Everyone laughs at Jeff," I pointed out. "Not everyone does it from a phone booth, though."

"That's for sure," Jeff spouted, coming out from hiding. "If Clark Kent needed to change in that booth now, he couldn't. He'd just have to fly off to save the world in his underwear." He was pleased to see all of us, including Samantha, laugh at the joke. He enjoyed being silly around me just because he liked me. But, he knew Samantha really needed to be cheered up at times.

"Come on, Sammie, you're not going to turn into Supergirl or Batgirl in there," Michelle remarked.

"No, but it might be a clear indication that she wants to join the newspaper staff," Jeff said, still on his Superman kick. When I gave him a look, Jeff said, "Hey, it could be worse. If she wanted to be Batman she'd have to eat in a cave somewhere. And the Bionic Woman...well, I don't think we want to get into that." He knew the Six Million Dollar Man had been rebuilt with many robotic parts, or something like that. He assumed that the Bionic Woman had been injured terribly and rebuilt the same way.

While Samantha enjoyed the laugh, I knew she'd need to talk, too. Given that Jeff still wasn't mature enough to know when to stop at times, I calmly led him away so Samantha and Courtney could talk. We found another new sixth grader whom Missy had found for Samantha to eat with; we went from 6th to 9th so Missy was still there.

Danny – First meeting Jeff, etc.:

That trick pen Jeff had used to squirt ink on Michelle's new dress had made a horrible first impression on me, considering my love for cleanliness. However, his mom had some ideas for how to get that ink out, and as we spoke while they made up, it sounded like he had a very nice family. Joey seemed to like him right away.

We'd talked over the years, as D.J. and - mostly - Stephanie babysat the children. Once we learned about their marital problems, we encouraged them to get counseling rather than throwing it away. Thankfully, after working out some things his parents stayed together, and remained happily married till one died years later.

Jeff could still be goofy. And yet, there was something all of us – especially Michelle, of course – found so sweet about him. He really cared about helping Samantha, and Michelle. He'd liked Michelle since fourth grade, at least.[650]

Jeff demonstrated that kindness in how he stood up for Samantha like a big brother. Part of that was him wanting to help someone, because he was genuinely a nice kid. Part, though, was just the fact he enjoyed pleasing Michelle. He'd gone from always being goofy to get her attention to trying to figure out what might make her happy. And, he recognized that her heart was really set on helping Samantha and keeping her away from some of the rougher boys who might try to mistreat her.

Becky – Aug. 29 – Jeff's big practical joke:

Today, of course, the trouble was just helping Samantha feel more comfortable. She met a good friend named Olivia there, who had gone to a different elementary school As we've said before, Steph had a great team around her. We could see things moving slowly with Michelle and Jeff, too, though.

I took the girls out to the mall – Stephanie and Samantha went one way while Michelle and Jeff went with me another way. Michelle and I stepped into a shoe store, but there was a toy store nearby. There were these talking dolls on the shelves that repeated whatever was said – of course, with batteries so kids could try them out. On another shelf, far away, were these singing fish dolls or something, I don't know exactly what they were, the singing distracted me.

That's right, it distracted me. Because, guess who put a dozen singing dolls right in front of the talking dolls and turned them on at different times? Yep, it was Jeff, all right. The commotion was at its height as Michelle stepped into the toy store and found Jeff walking away from them with an impish grin.

That day, she understood for the first time how someone could be laughing too hard to scold a child. She still can't believe he did that, but thankfully that was the worst prank he ever pulled. Even that was just like Joey, though.

Jesse – On Samantha and her friends and activities:

As Samantha continued to feel closer to Stephanie, the times when she felt really bummed out about the lack of love her parents showed diminished, though the sadness over her first years would always be there. She had learned to budget her time better, and yet continue to fill her life with great activities.

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[650] He could possibly have liked her earlier, but not wanted to admit it; he and Michelle would talk on the playground, even in the TVU, as shown. The earlier note about the book "Once Upon A Mix-Up" is a good place for the start of his definitely liking to hang around her, though.

Dance was the main thing, of course. She loved that so much. There had been no major problems at dance school, because she had a wonderful group with her. Her dance partner's mom was a wonderful leader. It was easy for Samantha to confide in her. And, being on stage felt natural, just as it had for me with music, she loved it so much.

She wasn't as much into acting, of course, but in February she got another small part in a local play. She also auditioned for Annie in the spring - she was a bit small, but next year she'd be cast as Annie. And, she would really enjoy that.

She played soccer, too, but didn't have as much time for it now; middle school really is a lot more demanding. She also was in a couple more ads.

She also began riding horses quite a bit. She had enjoyed it before, but this year is when she really got into it for fun with Michelle and Elizabeth, though like Cassie she was always apprehensive about entering contests and especially jumping.[651] This spring, Elizabeth won our local jumping competition for the first time since her fourth straight win in 1995, after seeing michelle walk off the field groggy but okay. She'd win again next year before Michelle took it in 2000.

This was Elizabeth's only troublesome match, however, and that was because she recalled the accident. She credited it with building her perseverance, though, and helping her learn to focus during the Olympics years later.

She'd become good friends with Michelle and Samantha, and the girls enjoyed riding together. It provided a welcome break for all of them. Michelle only ever jumped in our local competition, and even that was just for fun.

D.J. – Oct. 1 – Kimmy and Duane in Love (or whatever):

Kimmy came up to me looking as excited as I'd ever seen her. "Deej, it's official. Duane and I are in love."

Steve and I were together chatting, and he looked askance at her. "I thought the two of you were just in…well, whatever," Steve replied.

"That was before." Kimmy tilted her head in that peculiar way of hers. "Well, it's now, too. Except, when we held hands under the table last night, he looked into my eyes, and I asked him if he was thinking about love. And, he said 'whatever' in the most romantic way I've ever heard it."

Joey's new kids, who we were babysitting, overheard a little and looked up from a board game they were playing. "What was romantic?" Justin asked.

"Whatever," Kimmy explained.

Wendy looked at her strangely. "You're weird," she replied.

I explained for Wendy, not wanting her to think Kimmy was more unusual than she was. "It's just that her boyfriend is a man of few words. Okay, one word."

"Actually, he says more than 'whatever,' but usually not much. It's like he's in his own little world. Only now, I get to be a part of it. Last night, we went back to his place, and he showed me his artistic rendering of the internal plumbing of London in the 1950s." Kimmy said that with the happiest look on her face.

It was strange, but Duane was a very nice fellow. Few people would have thought about getting close to him, but I had to give Kimmy credit here. She saw Duane had a sensitive soul underneath that one-word exterior. He loved Shakespeare, and he loved

[651] "How To Hide A Horse" – Cassie lists her body hitting the ground as one of the things she connects with jumping, still thinking of Michelle's accident.

plumbing. He had other odd habits, too, and had grown to love wrestling, thanks to Kimmy. In fact, I'd been helping to encourage him to become a speaker, since he had overcome so much. He would eventually become a decent motivational speaker, though he never went to Harvard or anything.

Kimmy and Duane ended up marrying a couple years later, and he had the guts to say "I love you" for real soon after this, with some help from friends who aided him in expressing his real feelings; including Steve.

Joey - Nov., 1998 – Becoming a Family Man:

I didn't pull really crazy pranks like Jeff anymore, though I did some my first few years with Danny and his family. I had my own kids to consider now.

However, I continued to perform comedy acts, and on very rare occasions even now – when we could make it a family vacation - went to comedy clubs around the nation. Samantha was along with us sometimes, though dancing kept her occupied quite a bit. She'd learned to have fun with other things too, though.

I still wanted to be on the Tonight Show someday, so local comedy clubs and the very rare visit to someplace like Vegas would have to be my ticket there.

Just as Jesse's relationship with the Beach Boys had helped him, my filling in as the opening act for Wayne Newton was seen by some as the key. I'd opened for him at a large county fair over the summer, where I took Suzie and her kids as part of a family vacation. Plus, I met a few other celebrities.

I wasn't huge into church stuff, but I'd been influenced by D.J.'s example to pray more, and Suzie was big into that. The more I thought about it, the more I wondered, what if my big chance was to come not because of comedy, but because of something else that happened to draw attention.

Eventually, I just prayed and waited for it to come. My agent got in touch with Jay Leno and his crew after Jesse and I were stuck broadcasting from a ski resort for several days because of heavy snows. They remembered my name because of previous tapes I'd sent them, plus having my name mentioned a couple times by Mr. Newton. I ended up appearing in January of 2001.

Jesse - Apr. 1, 1999 - Gotcha:

Joey claimed to know great Elvis impersonators. But, one he brought to Becky's and my house before our radio show today made me think Joey was crazy.

"What? That can't be an Elvis impersonator," I cried out, staring as the men walked in the door. "For one thing, he looks too old." This guy had very little hair, for instance, where Elvis always had a lot. His face was covered with wrinkles. Joey tried to explain this guy really was Elvis in his middle seventies. In fact, the guy professed to be Elvis. I told him he was nuts, nobody impersonates Elvis by pretending to be Elvis as he would be today. Besides, I argued, Elvis never would have lost that much hair.

I noticed Becky holding a video camera to record the even.

"Thank you, thank you very much," the elderly man said, his voice cracking a bit upon being offered a chair in our living room. Becky and I were in our own home, with Nicky, Alex, and Melanie, our adopted girl. "Well, Jesse, I've aged a lot in 22 years."

I continued to stare at him. "What?"

"Like I said, Jess, he's the real deal. He told me how he had to go into seclusion

to get over a lot of problems, and then just hid out of sight," Joey explained.

Using flawless Elvis mannerisms, yet with a few small, Parkinson's-style shakes for effect,, the fellow said, "That's right. I got tired of livin' the fast life. I just retired to a nice little home in a small town and I spend my days workin' my garden and watchin' the beautiful sunrises. I got enough to live on, but I sold the rest and used it to pay off the national debt of a small country. Graceland's actually run by a corporation."

My mouth remained agape for several seconds. "But…Joey, look, I don't know what kind of line this guy fed you, but that's the dumbest Elvis impersonation I ever saw! An Elvis impersonator's supposed to look like the king, it's why all those crazy supermarket tabloids that say Elvis is alive have him lookin' like he did back in the seventies! He should at least have hair!"

"Hey, people change over the years," Joey said as "Elvis" reached into a dish and grabbed some nuts, and they spoke for a couple minutes.

As the man ate, Nicky, Alex, and Melanie entered the house. After we exchanged hugs, the boys asked, "Who's that" in unison.

"It's not Elvis," I said firmly.

"That narrows it down a little," Becky joked.

"Hey, big mama, I know it's hard to believe. I was just tellin' your dad here, boys, about my retirement. Yeah, I used to sing quite a bit, back in my day." He began to sing "Love Me Tender" in an Elvis manner, but with a much older voice.

Becky glanced at the calendar while I commented about how Elvis impersonators were supposed to look - and sing. "This guy doesn't sound like an Elvis impersonator! They're not supposed to sound like they're in their sixties or seventies! And, Elvis surely would not have gone bald," I finished with a flourish.

I stopped, though, as the man sang the last lines with the same tune but with different words. "And a Happy April Fool; from my grandson Jeff."

Joey and Becky burst out laughing, and the kids giggled. My mouth stood agape as I slowly realized what had happened - and that the kids had told a few April Fool's jokes earlier. Why hadn't I thought of what day it was? "Of course. Oh, thank goodness; maybe that means Elvis still would have had his hair if he were alive."

Jeff's grandfather introduced himself, sounding younger than he had when he'd done Elvis - he'd wanted to sound and act more ancient for effect while doing the joking impersonation. "Michelle and Jeff hatched the idea about the same time as Joey did," he explained. "Jeff knew I could do a fair Elvis impersonation, except he wanted me to do an 'old Elvis.' So, they got together, told your wife about it, and we just had to record the reaction so they could see it."

"We really got you, huh, Jess?" Joey asked.

"I'll say; man, Joey told me he was going to try to get an Elvis impersonator for our radio show today, and then you come in and I'm thinking, 'Oh my goodness, this is just not Elvis!' And the way I love Elvis…"

I shook my head and chuckled in spite of myself. I don't like to admit it, but that was one funny April Fool's prank. And, it's true, we don't think about how Elvis would be if he were still alive, we always think of him back then.

However, I still maintain he'd have kept all his hair.

Becky:

As we were pulling that prank, Samantha's body was acting up on her, as she entered puberty. The school called, and by the time I got down there, most of the other students were leaving their last classes. I saw a friend of Michelle's and told her to tell Michelle what happened, and that I'd take Samantha home – that is, in this case, to where Danny and the girls lived.

Stephanie met us there, and we talked for quite a while about it. There were lots of things Samantha was still a bit nervous about, but thankfully, we were past one of the major hurdles. Stephanie had been nervous about just discussing that with Samantha – I couldn't help but laugh at the thought that Danny rubbed off on her with that. But, I think she really wanted to keep Samantha innocent as long as she could, too.

Still, we'd discussed it, and she hadn't been sure what to expect. Plus, when it arrived, well, it's always a tad disconcerting.

Stephanie - On Samantha's first "crush":

I couldn't believe it. Samantha was entering adolescence. She'd been acting like that with fictional characters for a while, of course. She liked watching "Hogan's Heroes" because she thought Corporal LeBeau was "so cute!"

I felt comfortable with that. After all, she understood he was fictional, and we'd had long talks with D.J. and Aunt Becky and – to some extent – Suzie where we discussed how it's kind of fun to look at a guy and say he's cute, but that doesn't mean you have to go after that guy. After all, the more she thought about it – and tried to write about it - she really would have hated to be in a German prisoner of war camp with him.

However, it brought a concern to my mind.

Samantha wasn't dating yet - she wouldn't turn 13 for another year, and I was leery about letting her date even then, though I had. After all, even Michelle and Jeff just did things together with a group, and would for at least a year longer.

I wanted to protect her by hopefully finding her a boyfriend for her. Then, she could have the freedom we'd had, without needing more restrictive rules, though I felt having a chaperone would be a good idea. Michelle had done well for me a few times, in finding dates. Not only that, but I'd been disappointed by a few of the boys I'd gone with; one in particular seemed to think he should control everything about what happened. I knew Samantha might be very easily swayed if I wasn't careful.

On the other hand, there were some positive things to her entering adolescence. Her small size meant that she hadn't matured as fast physically, so not as many boys noticed her. She wished she were growing faster, but I emphasized that the way some kids act, she was better off going slowly. One of the nicest boys I'd found had been a sixth grader![652] Besides, she could be "Annie" for another year or two.

D.J. – No Flamingo problems:

Another big blessing was that the Flamingoes weren't a problem. Part of this was her small size. She was a bit below their radar in competing for boys. However, a greater part was that Steph's refusal to join the Flamingoes caused much of their dislike for Steph. When Steph stood up for what was right it also antagonized them.

Samantha wasn't one to fight for what was right on her own. She was getting

[652] "The Truth About Boys" – there is room for a few Stephanie books like this in the spring, though fall is too crowded now, but spring is more likely with the boy's age, anyway.

there, but the battle with Emily for the class presidency had taxed her quite a bit. Besides, Stephanie had begun to be friends with some of the Flamingoes now that they were seniors. She told them emphatically that they were not to let their younger siblings bother Samantha. That got through to them, and there were no problems.

Since Kathy and I were friends again, and her younger sister had founded the clique, Kathy was another contact to use to keep Samantha from getting bothered, and to keep her out of trouble. Jeff's and Courtney's brothers could also help keep tabs on boys, and steer any bad ones away from Samantha if that became necessary.

She didn't get in much trouble, but she got in some. This was an era when girls tried to dress in, shall we say, inappropriate ways. Steph had to get on her a time or two to keep her from revealing too much. Of course, Michelle could do that just as easily, and usually did, but with anything like that, Steph had a follow-up talk, at least.

Samantha – Sept. 10 – Struggles With Clothing, Fitting In:

It was really a struggle. I guess Steph and D.J. each felt that way a little. I think I just tried too hard to get noticed. That's an important thing for kids that age.

At least when I tried to put on too much makeup it was understandable. Steph didn't mind as much – though she did help me to apply it correctly – because as she said, "Boys aren't going to want to hang around girls who look like they have three days' output of the Revlon factory on them."

The top I bought next spring was another story. I had enough money when I was shopping with Courtney and her family; they were elsewhere in the store and I bought it. Courtney didn't like the midriff top, so I agreed to put a regular shirt over it.

However, I though I would need something like it to get noticed. When Courtney was absent one day I took off the shirt and went around in the midriff for a couple minutes, till Michelle saw me. I asked her what she thought, and she took one look at me by the phone booths and said, "Where's the rest of it?" She looked at her watch. "Follow me to my locker, I've got an extra sweater you can throw on over that," she said in a voice and with a look that implied I'd better listen.

"I'm sorry, Michelle," I said dejectedly. Having her upset at me almost seemed worse at times than having Stephanie mad. "I just want people to notice me."

"You like showing off your belly button lint?" Michelle asked with raised eyebrows. I couldn't help but laugh. "Okay, that was more like Jeff, but still…"

Michelle smiled as she put an arm around me, and I rolled up the sleeves on that sw4eater – her spare sweater was a tad small on her, but big on me.

"Look, Sammie," she said sweetly, "I know you're in a hurry to grow up. But, that doesn't mean you have to show off like that. The people who love you are the ones who care about what's on the inside, anyway. Not what your skin looks like."

I sighed, knowing Michelle was right. Sometimes it was so hard to figure out how to attract guys, though. I knew the boys I wanted were the ones who accepted me for who I was. I didn't even feel like bragging about my ballet very much, figuring boys might not care about ballet as much, but also because I was about more than just that.

"Are you going to tell Stephanie?"

"No, you are," Michelle told me. After a few seconds of her gaze, I agreed. The nice part was, I was totally confident Stephanie would understand by now. Stephanie could tell I was sorry, but we had a long talk about proper outfits, anyway, and I never

wore this one again. Thankfully, I never had huge problems with fitting in. For instance, there weren't many who smoked anyway, and I'd have done that; neither would any of the others; it seemed so revolting. Lots of temptation comes from who you hang around, anyway, and we all preferred friends who steered clear of trouble.

Joey – On the Girls and Clothing:

The biggest problem was that so much of girls' clothing made it appear as though every day was a swimsuit competition. There was poor selection, and it only got worse in some areas. However, we had some solutions.

First, Samantha did like a lot of frillier dresses. That really allowed her to find things that didn't show much skin. However, there were going to be times when she wanted to dress down a little; she was never into t-shirts or jeans anymore, but just a nice, relaxing sweater and the like, like D.J.'s more fashionable stuff, back when fashion meant modesty, for the most part. That was what Michelle and the older ones liked. She could always go a size up if she had to, of course.

There were, of course, stores that offered more in the way of selection, but they also tended to look less stylish, more plain. But, those could always be accessorized.

Sometimes, it meant making one's own clothes.

Jesse –Nov. 30 – Jesse the Seamstress:

Joey had suggested making clothes for Wendy like this, as a matter of fact. The idea was embraced so much that Becky handed me some thread one day, and said I should make some patterns to put on something she'd bought for Melanie, our girl. She was concerned because even the outfits for younger children were starting to look a little too immodest, though that wouldn't be a huge problem for a few years.

I looked oddly at her, and put them down hastily. "Aw, come on, Becky, these fingers have plucked a guitar." I rose and stepped straight into her trap. "These are the hands of a musician…what's so funny?"

"You don't know how to sew, do you?" she teased, though she knew I'd done it a lot for the girls, like putting a head back on one of Steph's bears. I'd even sewed buttons on Mr. Woodchuck.[653]

"What's that got to do with anything? Come on, Becky, why can't you sew these flowers and things you bought for her onto her sweater?"

"Come on, Jess, it would mean so much to her. Besides, I have to prepare more for my show with the guests I have," she pointed out.

I started to refuse, but she got me asking whether I could sew. Before I knew it, I picked up those pins and needles and said, "Okay," and began to sew. "Just watch me."

Becky and I snuggled later, and I had to admit, I loved it when she got me to do stuff like that. I'd done a pretty good job of sewing, in fact.

"Makes you think of Pam, huh?" she asked me tenderly.

"You ain't kiddin', Becky. Sometimes, like with that sewing thing, I just feel like you've got a part of her for me to treasure." I hastened to add, "Stephanie's a lot better at sewing, though," before Becky and I kissed.

Danny – Learning to sew:

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[653] "Jesse's Girl" and "Play It Again, Jess"

D.J. had taught her to sew, and the girls each taught Michelle and Samantha. Stephanie had made an entire sweater for my mom for Christmas, in fact.[654] So, she was a natural at it. She and some of her friends helped at times to sew things, but they generally didn't have to do that for Samantha, because of Samantha's love for fancier stuff.

However, for those who preferred a more casual style, it was a great talent. And, my girls always disliked the looser ways of society in general.[655]

Becky – Jan. 12, 2000 - Elizabeth and the Olympics:

Samantha talked about boys, but she really didn't have a lot of time for them in seventh grade yet. However, it also seemed like she was trying to do too much. Elizabeth noticed this, too, when they'd ride horses. Since she was training to be a possible Olympic rider someday, she often had sound advice for Samantha.

In fact, Elizabeth finished very high up in a national competition for junior riders and jumpers the following summer, in 2000. She was about a year older than Michelle. She'd be one of the youngest winners in 2001; unlike most Olympic athletes, those in her sport didn't often make the team till their twenties, and could compete in their forties. When she made the team in 2006, she was one of the youngest members.

Stephanie – Mar. 14, 2000 – Samantha's first babysitting job:

At Dad's suggestion, and the others', I tried to give Samantha one of my babysitting jobs so she could take her mind off dancing a little bit.

Joey's wife was eight months' pregnant, and due in a couple weeks. Justin and Wendy were thrilled. They'd really accepted Joey as their new dad in a wonderful way. And, our whole family loved having Suzie, Justin, and Wendy in it.

I'd babysat for them a number of times. But, this time, Justin – who was a bit old for a sitter anyway at fourteen – was at a friend's, so it was just Wendy. I figured Samantha could handle this one alone.

Could I handle the fact she was doing it, though?

Joey:

Suzie and I agreed that Samantha was ready to baby-sit a really well-behaved kid, where she didn't have much to do but keep her entertained. She wasn't ready to watch a toddler by herself yet, but Wendy was usually a breeze.

Stephanie dropped Samantha off as were we close to leaving. She and Samantha hugged, and then Stephanie just stood there, in the doorway, beaming as she gazed at Samantha. She breathed deeply and said, "I can't believe it yet."

"It's amazing, huh?" Suzie asked as she waddled toward the door.

"Yep, she's ready to watch a kid on her own." I looked at Stephanie. "Are you ready for her to?"

"Huh? Oh, sure. I mean, I'm just thinking about the fact that she's like my little

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[654] "Dear Michelle: How Will Santa Find Me." She has a sewing project in the TV Universe, as well. Slight variations in Granny Tanner's travels, seeing her other kids, account for why they don't travel to see her at the same time in the TVU. Even there, they might go to see her over New Years.

[655] Books always have more modesty than on TV, where they are still conservative compared to many. Any books that have Stephanie liking rougher music are almost surely TV Universe, or that's an incidental part, like ages being off by a year, that can be ignored as incorrect, as the general consensus is always that they are more conservative in books

girl. I mean, I've really raised her, and now, here she is…ready to be on her own, in charge of someone else…" Samantha laughed as Stephanie ran up to her and hugged her again. "I'm so proud of you!"

"Thanks."

"Wow, and she hasn't even gotten out the door yet," Wendy said. As she observed Stephanie, she looked at Samantha. "In fact, will she get out the door?"

Samantha smiled and put an arm around Wendy. She remembered helping her as they both served as flower girls at my and Suzie's wedding, and doing so many other cool things. It had taken a while, but she'd grown to the point where she needed to be able to say confidently that she could handle something like an adult. And, having someone like Wendy in the family gave her that chance.

"I'm sure she will," Samantha finally told Wendy. "Sometimes, it just takes her a few minutes. I guess she likes to stand there and reminisce."

"You know, Stephanie, maybe if we all go together, it'll help," Suzie suggested.

Stephanie liked that idea. I jokingly tried to squeeze out the door with Stephanie, and we were caught for a second before we got out. As we walked down the drive to our cars, Stephanie looked back to see Samantha and Wendy waving at the window. Samantha looked just about as proud as I've ever seen her.

The best part was, I was part of that, too.

Samantha:

"Now what?"

I was stunned. I'd grown to love the togetherness of the families I was part of, especially the Tanners. Being alone wasn't all that odd, and I didn't automatically feel down when I was. However, this was extremely different.

The schoolgirl next to me was my charge. For a brief time, anyway, I had to keep her entertained.

"Well, let's see, you ate, right?" She had. I remembered Stephanie telling me about her first time watching Michelle; she'd been eased into things, too, with a very easy charge. "And, you haven't had your bath."

"It's too early for that," Wendy noted.

I looked at the clock. "Oh, yeah, I guess it is," I said with a nervous laugh.

"Wanna play a game?"

I concurred. For right now, it would probably be easiest if I simply let my charges call the shots. I just didn't like ordering others around, and she wouldn't take advantage. This was why Stephanie knew she'd be perfect for me to handle.

We did that for a while, then sat and had a little snack while talking expectantly about the new arrival in her family.

"Do you have a big family?" Wendy asked me.

She could tell the query made me a little sad. I put an arm around her and said simply, "Your dad and Stephanie and all of them are my family. At least, that's who I think of as family."

She looked strangely at me and asked, "Are you sad?"

"Oh…no, no, not really. It's just, well…" I didn't know how to continue.

"I know," she said sweetly, putting a hand on my back. She repeated things the way she'd always heard them when she felt sad. "Someone died, didn't they? Mom says

it's okay to be sad. My birth dad died, too. Then Mom got married again. But, Mr. Joey never replaced Daddy. He's still in my heart, too."

We cuddled for a moment, and I concurred. "That's right. It's like that, except… Stephanie's the only one I've known who's like a mother. She didn't have anyone to replace. But, I'm fine now, really," I assured her.

We drifted on to other topics. I realized that Wendy had taken that rather well, all things considered. Since she didn't have real memories of her biological father, who had died before she turned two, she could figure that I wouldn't have memories at all of my parents. I deduced later that she figured they died when I was a baby. She knew Michelle's mom had died then.

Still, it wasn't something I wanted to have to bring up with others if I could help it. I was grateful that she'd understood as well as she had. And, when it came to my own children, I would want to protect them for a long time.

I told Joey what Wendy had asked, but I hadn't had time to get really sad about it. Stephanie and Michelle could tell there was no problem. Wendy was cautioned not to talk to others outside the family about it; I didn't want everyone knowing everything. She was satisfied with what she knew, though, and how she assumed things had happened like with her family. So, I didn't bother telling her everything. In fact, later, for a few years my own kids assumed my parents had died, too.

Michelle:

No major mishaps happened the first night. Steph was easing Samantha into stuff just like she had me, only much more slowly because of Samantha's emotional problems. Cassie, Mandy, and I had our own business, just like Steph and her friends had had.

We'd handled a few rough ones, though Steph and her friends got those most of the time since they were older. However, we knew it would be a good while before Samantha ever handled a really wild one. She needed things to be nice and calm.

She didn't even baby-sit that much, really; just in the family for a while. Wendy really liked her, though. Another way would soon be found to keep Samantha from burning herself out with too many activities, though. Steph not only insisted she cut back on soccer because of all the time it was taking, in addition to dance, she organized something really special – a trip to Paris.

D.J. – June 1 – Marrying Steve, Trip to Paris:

Now that I'd graduated from college with honors, Steve and I had spent more and more time together. While we took it slower, he still proposed early next year. We tied the knot that year, but did lots of fun things together before having kids. I wouldn't have my first one till shortly after Steph and Michelle had theirs. I wasn't burned out on it, but my being so proactive had led me to not rush things snd enjoy freedom more. I was building plenty of great rewards in heaven..

We had spent a fabulous time ringing in the New Year in January of 2000, and discussing when the millennium really began. Most of our friends knew it really started in 2001, because there was no year zero. A few went along with the masses and said 2000. Kimmy speculated that it might start in May or June, because all those leap years made things too confusing. Plus, she said since people were more illiterate they might not have known how to tell time then. Her reasoning was interesting, but I didn't know how

that could translate into a millennium starting in midyear.

Regardless, Stephanie suggested we go to Paris - she and Samantha would take a vacation, and Kimmy, Duane, Steve, and I could go as chaperones. Once, Samantha's parents promised to pay for the whole trip, Steph's friends, Allie and Darcy, came, too, as did Samantha's friend Courtney.

Why wouldn't her parents pay? Samantha had forgiven her parents, but had little contact with them. However, they could still brag about her accomplishments. So, they didn't want her burning herself out, either. And, saying their daughter was on an exclusive getaway in Paris made them sound wealthier, too.

Danny - June 8:

Normally, I might have insisted on going, too. However, I was already going to Washington, D.C. as a chaperone for top members of Michelle's eighth grade class. This included her and Jeff.

Still, I completely trusted D.J. to keep an eye on Steph, who had graduated high school recently. After all, I'd trusted her since Pam's death. I wondered if D.J. and Steve might come back engaged, but they didn't; that wouldn't happen till early next year. However, I could tell they were getting very close to one another.

D.J. loved the trip. She might have jumped into marriage earlier without her earlier dedication to family - though I would have made sure it was after college - and started a family very quickly. However, now, she was excited to explore and have fun in her twenties. That might include marriage, but she hoped that she and Steve could do some fun things together before having kids.

Speaking of children, she planned to have one, perhaps two, and have them quite far apart. This was something else that stemmed from losing Pam; she wanted a child to be able to help his or her younger sibling quite a bit if anything happened to her. Not only that, but I think she wanted to pamper one, rather than have them feeling forced to share everything. She'd make sure that child turned into a fine young lady or gentleman. However, she didn't want them feeling like they had to take on loads of responsibility, either. She wanted her kid to feel like she could have fun being a kid.

Ironically, her girl would still grow up to be a PA, but part of that was the influence of a slightly older cousin, Steph's firstborn, who was named Pamela.

Stephanie - June 12 – Full House meets The Love Boat:

Samantha met a boy. That wouldn't have been too rough, except I felt like my chaperones were dropping likel flies out of the picture. Darcy met Walter, who'd moved away but who I still remembered from grade school. They hit it off really well. He was on some pre-college jaunt before going to M.I.T. in the fall. Courtney met a nice boy, too. And, of course, Kimmy was Kimmy. We were at the place the Burkes recommended - a posh penthouse that they'd stayed in once. And, Kimmy filled the hot tub with bubble bath, and turned on the water. She'd gotten things mixed up, and when the fellow in charge of making us feel welcome ran into the bathroom, he let out a huge scream. Kimmy did lots of cleaning that day.

Anyway, it was a battle to keep things going smoothly. I sounded a bit too much like Dad in wanting everything to be perfect. In the end, D.J. and the others helped me to see that things were still good, because we had lots of fun, even though our trip had

turned into an episode of "The Love Boat." I worried overly much about Samantha, but she didn't run off with the boy or anything. She respected her boundaries.

Not only that, but the sweetest thing happened in that penthouse, that made it all seem worthwhile.

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2. Wind Beneath My Wings: June. 2000-

Samantha – Stephanie's Real, Heartfelt Title:

The feelings had been growing for a long time. From that first "I love you" like a parent and child would say, I'd grown more and more to realize the comfort I felt with her, even when she corrected me, was just like that of a child with a mother.

I'd made the connection bit by bit, feeling more and more like I really had one. However, it never would have worked if it was forced. I wouldn't have thought it would happen at all. And yet, as we discussed things, it just popped out.

I called Stephanie "Mom."

Stephanie:

We were frozen in time for a second. The enormity of what had just happened sank in very slowly.

I'd actually uttered it, in a way, a moment earlier. We were talking about this boy Samantha had met, and how I was trying to protect her. And, in searching for a way to describe our relationship, I commented that we were going to be like mother and daughter forever. Even that had been a shocker.

Still, that comparison might have just been left at that, except that Samantha really felt like trying it out, seeing how it felt to call someone "Mom" who had done so much for her. It was true – I practically was a mother.

Samantha:

It was a feeling of love like before, but that love had grown so much, it was incredible. My joy at having someone like Stephanie to guide and support me, no matter what, was such that I couldn't put it into words.

I found one, though. It slipped out so naturally, because I'd seen so many other kids use it. My mind had been forming an image of what this ideal Mom was like, and then and there, that image connected with the circumstances. It wouldn't happen often, especially not right away. I don't think I even noticed at first. We both froze for a second, tears forming in Stephanie's eyes as she grasped the vastness of what had happened.

Stephanie – June 24 – Returning Home, Trip Summary, Pictures, etc.:

In a way, it was like D.J. had felt when we gave her breakfast in bed, and Michelle gave her that Mother's Day card. However, there was so much more.

"Great trip, huh?" Samantha said to me once we arrived home.

I walked over to the small couch in my room, and we sat on it. "Yeah, lots of cool stuff happened, didn't it?"

Samantha nodded. "I still can't get over it. My first real boyfriend; even though I can only e-mail him." She and I both knew it wouldn't last, I figured why discourage her. It would teach her not to rely so much on initial feelings. "And, of course, hearing me call

you 'Mom' must have felt…." She couldn't put it into words.

I couldn't, either. "It's just been such an amazing ride."

"I know. I had lots of problems when we met."

I concurred - lots of emotional baggage, the kind she only discussed with me, Michelle, Courtney, Dr. Steiner, or Missy. Missy planned on a career in psychology, having seen so much as PA, and while Samantha wouldn't need to see anyone regularly by that point, she did keep it touch quite a bit with Missy, and talked occasionally with her, once Missy got her degree.

Much more was left on my shoulders by Samantha in the form of tears that first year, though she hadn't confided everything.

"I probably didn't have the words at first to confide all I did to Michelle and Courtney that one night," she muttered lowly, resting her head in my chest. I lovingly stroked her long hair, and promised that she could tell me anything. "I'm just glad it's all over. Except, I don't think I want to see those diaries I've written."

"Good idea, we should leave them in the upper attic."

"There were times back then I felt so scared because of a nightmare the previous night, or thought about so many things that the other kids had, once I started realizing how loving other parents were." She sighed contentedly. "I've really had a mom all along in you," she said merrily.

"You sure have." Things like helping her complete potty training those first few months, and making sure kids never noticed to tease her, and so much else. I'd boosted her confidence, been in her corner all the time. I'd received some back pay - as well as current payments - for my work as a nanny, but real payment wouldn't come till I got to Heaven, for all that I'd been through with her. And yet, with that one word, somehow, I began to feel like I was getting paid right here.

"The videos, too," Samantha added. "We'll put videos from my first few years all on one DVD and hide it. I'll tell my kids…someday. When they're my age now."

"I'll be here for you when you do. I know it's rough. But, just remember, you're all right now. We might struggle with these teen years. But, everything's going to be okay." As she agreed, I realized that she'd probably have some problems and need to talk at times her whole life, but things were vastly improved from what they had been. I was truly helping her soar like an eagle.

Michelle – Sat., Aug. 7, 2000 – Samantha Moves In:

Samantha had been with us so much, we made it official. She moved in today. With Joey married now, it wasn't hard to store all Samantha's stuff in the basement when we excitedly moved her into my room. She'd been spending every night there anyway..

She still had a tidy sum she'd get from her parents – part in her twenties, part at thirty - which would be used somewhat to fund better run orphanages and get good workers where they had summer homes in the Caribbean. Sam found it hard to spend all that money herself, with how her parents had handled it.

But, as far as living arrangements, she was ready to cut the few ties that remained. It worked out well; they'd sell the mansion when the area hit a big slump in 2002.

She'd forgiven her parents earlier; as I told her, it just means you care about them anyway; it doesn't say something was right. Her parents saw the light, and made peace with Samantha and with God - her dad a couple months before his death, her mom at the

funeral. She always knew Stephanie as her mother emotionally, but at least years from now, Samantha would start a bit of a relationship with her biological mother.

For now, we were all excited. It was so amazing to all of us how far we'd come, and how close we all were. Steph was pretty protective; even more than Dad. Still, Samantha didn't mind. She loved the feeling of warmth and protection.

Danny - Dec. 26, 2000 – Steph's Debutante Ball; Samantha Starting To Like Boys:

Steph was like me at times with Samantha - she had lots of trouble letting go. She had allowed her to go to dance school, trusting the moms who went along, and Samantha had been okay. She'd even taken Samantha to get her ears pierced at the same time Joey and she went with Michelle to get her ears pierced. It was a tenth birthday gift for Michelle, a signal even I was starting to let go a lot better.

Some areas were tougher, though. Boys would be one of them. Samantha attended Stephanie's debutante ball, and had her first kiss. Okay, Steph didn't exactly freak out, but she became quite wary of what kinds of boys might want to hang around Samantha.

Becky:

It wasn't a "She might date boys like Jesse" thing like it might have been with Danny. To Stephanie, it was more like, "Samantha might wind up with someone who will take advantage of her emotional fragility and/or get her heart broken."

Steph had gone through a variety of boyfriends through about early eleventh grade before meeting the one who ended up taking her to her prom. However, that had fizzled until their breakup a couple months ago. This made her more concerned with finding the right boy for Samantha. Ideally, she told me, Samantha would never date anyone except the one she ends up marrying.

That was a tall order. With Samantha thirteen, she was free to go on group outings with friends in mixed couple pairings. In fact, she'd also been on a variety of group "dates" to places like Anthony's Pizza. She'd met her share of nice guys, and after this first kiss she was even more enthusiastic about it.

That made Stephanie's job a lot tougher, though.

Stephanie – Feb., 2001:

Samantha had also met her share of bad apples. Jeff had had to have a stern talk with one guy who came on really strong as it was last summer. Not only that, but with the formal the school had planned for that March, she was stepping up her search.

It almost landed her in big trouble, and for a second I overreacted, of course - I had Mom's excitability, and quickly feared the worst.

I believed her, though, with Michelle's help. And, it wasn't as bad as Samantha feared. She was just more shocked because she wasn't used to being alone with boys.

Jesse – Stephanie searching for a boyfriend for Samantha:

Samantha had known one thing – it was best to date boys her age. So, when she met a boy who went to another middle school, and he seemed kind of nice, she accepted his invitation to their school's formal.

He was kind of shy, and wound up getting beer with friends. Samantha stayed far away from that. However, he and Samantha got into a hallway next to the gym where the

dance was, and they kissed. She didn't like how long it was, and called to come home. But, it wasn't as bad as it could have gotten with an older boy. This boy in question was only thirteen, so he wasn't overly hormone driven.[656]

She told Michelle everything; she wouldn't tell Danny, but he'd been too excited, anyway, since Steve had just proposed to D.J.. Michelle and Steph believed her. They had a long talk about such boys, and I helped talk to Samantha about what could happen. I knew what some of these kids were like. Stephanie decided she would try to plan all of Samantha's dates; she wanted it to be more like courtship.

Finding one would be a challenge. She, Michelle, and their friends scoured the schools looking for the right match. Steph told me the few boys Michelel had found for her had been good ones; though not long lasting they were much better than a few of her own picks. So, she thought Michelle might be the one to find Samantha's next boyfriend.

Danny:

It was a quest that made me proud. It wasn't just a bunch of people on a scavenger hunt. This was a bunch of people getting names and phone numbers, then Steph calling and interviewing them like they were the next Supreme Court justice. First, she quizzed the parents or guardians, in the rare case and aunt or uncle or grandparents cared for the kid. If they got past that stage, she talked to the kid.

Michelle:

We prayed a lot for "her future husband," too. After a few weeks of searching by all of us, Jeff told me about a kid he recalled from a baseball camp last summer. He'd become friends with him there, though they were opponents during the season. The boy's name was Colin, and he was in ninth, about a year older than Samantha.

He lived about 25 minutes away, and was in another school district. Also, he was good enough he might get a college scholarship, and could potentially turn pro. Steph wasn't sure at first thought about hooking her up with a potential pro athlete, but she decided the rest of his bio was so good, it was okay.

Stephanie:

I quizzed the adults I called about each boy's kindness, compassion, and many other things. I inquired as to whether he ever got in trouble. I wanted to know about grades, plans after high school, and so on. Just the fact that the parents or guardian knew or had at least heard of Michelle, Cassie, Mandy, Missy, Kiersten, or whoever else referred me – or at least had heard of them - was an important sign.

Colin reached the next level, where I interviewed the boy and asked more open ended questions. I even threw some thought provoking ones at them like, "What would you do if you had a million dollars."

It was one of those study break questions that we'd throw around in college. Most I interviewed would do more practical things. I knew some kids, like Uncle Jesse at that age, would party, Michelle uttered a really novel idea when she heard my friends and I chatting in the library. She said she'd buy the county fairgrounds and turn it into a homeless shelter. That would take considerably more money, but if a boy answered with something like that, I'd have to give him lots of credit.

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[656] Think Stephanie and that boy in the TV episode "Making Out Is Hard To Do"

Of course, it was really the Lord's influence, I reminded myself, that led Michelle to say that. Michelle had trusted Christ as Savior when she was about seven, and despite some small slips like D.J. had had, Michelle had really matured a lot spiritually. Indeed, we were all praying quite a bit about Samantha.

Colin passed the test and met Samantha a week before the school dance.

Samantha:

I was really shy, not knowing how to act, but Colin was nuts about baseball. I figured as long as I kept learning about that, he'd like me. Of course, he grew to like me for myself, but I still felt insecure at times, especially around new people. I was glad Missy was interested in psychology; I guess her experience as a PA really inspired her. I didn't need one every week now, but it would be great in later years to e-mail her all the time, and to talk to her once in a while when she'd come to visit or on the phone.

The coolest news was what Cassie wanted to do.

D.J. - Jan. 12, 2002 – Futures for Steph's, Michelle's Closest Friendss:

Mandy was planning on being a teacher. Darcy did, too; of athletics. She would coach field at U.S.C. in ten years, Mandy taught in our old grade school.

Cassie had been intrigued by medicine for a few years. I'd answered a number of questions after going into nursing. Now, she told me she was going into medicine. Cassie would become a pediatrician, not just to help kids like Samantha, but just because she wanted the challenge of medical school and helping others that way.

It was interesting that she'd been the most timid of Michelle and her friends as a schoolgirl, just as Allie had among Steph and her friends. As sometimes - but not always - happens, such girls outgrow their timidity. They become the most determined, only because they've come to recognize how to overcome that.

Admittedly, it takes someone giving lots of encouragement, like Cassie had her friends and even me. And, not everyone is really emotionally strong; Samantha's early years would not allow her to be a great leader like Cassie or Allie would. Even without that maybe Samantha wouldn't have. However, Cassie was one of those who was really maturing into a lady willing to take on any challenge.

Oh, and Allie? She met their old classmate Harry coming back from Paris, as we vacationed in Chicago. He had been part of the large Eastern Christian church out here, and once his family moved he grew more and more, till he was going to college at Moody Bible Institute. He felt led to be a missionary to Japan, where he still had grandparents. Now, after a year or so of communicating back and forth, Allie was feeling led to go with him. She'd been praying about that for a few months.

She would transfer to DePaul University this fall, and go to graduate school in Chattanooga, Tennessee with Harry in 2004. They married in Chattanooga in the summer of 2005, and wound up going onto the mission field in a few years. She loved it.

Stephanie - July 4, 2002 – Partings, for now:

Today, we had a big picnic before Allie moved out to Chicago. I couldn't help but think that we had perhaps ten more great years together than we might have if the other redistricting plan passed. Of course, she was in U.S.C. anyway, so we hadn't seen each other a lot, but it was much easier for her to fly back for holidays than it would be after

this. She still had her room at home, after all, for when she returned.

It was a tearful goodbye, but the transition had been longer, and part of me always thought we might go separate ways; maybe an aftereffect of Mom dying when I was so young. Ironically, in about a decade Darcy would end up coaching field hockey there.

For now, with D.J. and Steve having married, the bachelorette pad in the attic was mine. And, we went quietly up there to reminisce.

"Remember the time that Sunday School teacher and his wife came to visit, just as we got back from riding our bikes?" I asked. "What were we, thirteen, fourteen?"

"I remember; that's when I really put my trust in Christ to save me," Allie said fondly. "And Michelle asked why you hadn't told me about Him." They laughed. "You had, it was just a lot more subtle."

"Yeah, she didn't have a knack for subtlety yet, did she?" I asked. Darcy hadn't truthfully trusted Him till she was about that age, either.

"It was amazing how that worked out. Although, I think your Uncle Jesse's right, Stephanie, about everything happening for a reason; it would have wherever she was. Just like someone finding Samantha like you did," Darcy commented.

"You're right, guys," I said, thinking of the great strides we'd made over the last ten years. "You guys have always been there for me, helped support me, put up with my obsessing over boys, and my failed attempts at some things…"

"Oh, now if you're talking about some of those times we liked the same guy, Steph, that was just part of growing up," Darcy responded.

Allie agreed. "Yeah, you were just going through growing pains. Although, burning a salad was…" We burst out laughing. "Not your best moment."[657]

I confessed - it had been quite rough. "We've shared so much. Especially you and me, Allie." I couldn't help it - I started to cry. "I'm gonna miss you." We hugged tightly, and she repeated the same thing. "I guess that's part of what makes Heaven so great - we'll never have to say goodbye again."

"Yeah."

"It's funny, I never would have thought you'd be thinking of going off to some foreign field. Then again, who would have believed Samantha would have the chance to be a professional ballerina ten years ago?"

"You're right, Darce. I think that's part of what makes me feel good about Colin - by the time he knows whether he'll make it as a pro, her career will be about over. They usually don't dance much beyond 25, let alone 30."

Allie agreed. "I'll be back sometime, someday. And, we're going to keep praying for her parents to see the light," Allie promised. They did, as mentioned.

I knew she would. "Have a great time. Tell Harry we said 'hello.'"

Danny - Mar. 1, 2003 – Samantha's Sweet Sixteen:

Today, we celebrated the sixteenth birthday of a girl who had become like a daughter. Actually, since Steph's like her mother, I could say granddaughter, but at that point the concept was still a bit scary.

Steph made pretty many of the rules for her. She was used to following Steph's rules, so I didn't worry too much, though I was still the one in charge, technically. It was an unusual situation, but we'd become very good at making the most of those.

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[657] "Sugar And Spice Advice"

Joey:

Because Samantha respected me the most as a father figure, I'd helped set up a lot of the party. We rented out part of a very fancy restaurant, and treated her like the royalty she deserved to be treated like. Michelle joked that I was just giving her another princess party, but in reality, it was the kind of formal affair she was growing to love. It seemed that when it came to music, you either got that plus slow dancing, or some of the wild stuff they had nowadays. Samantha couldn't stand the wild stuff. Stephanie was glad to see some of her values had been rubbing off on Samantha for so long.

Samantha's parents continued to support her; the trust fund was there, and, they kept giving to charity, in her name and others'.

This meant that not only would Samantha and Michelle each get to be debutantes, they'd given so Michelle's best friends could each be debutantes, too - in 2004 - since they'd helped with Samantha so much. Considering Cassie's mom was proudest of all the great deals she'd get at garage sales, this was incredibly stunning for Cassie.

Michelle - Sept. 25, 2003 – Cassie Homecoming Queen; Career Choice:

Not only was Cassie still getting used to the fact she'd been promised that she could be a debutante, today we celebrated her being named as Homecoming Queen. And, I told the family and Cassie what my plans were.

"Remember how you always joked that one day, Kimmy would drop off a strangely named kid for one of us girls to raise, Dad?" I asked. "Well, I think you're going to get a lot more than that."

I knew Samantha's parents wouldn't have wanted to waste time searching for a good daycare - the only thing they seemed to be good at was writing checks. However, I understood that some families might need a loving, motherly figure.

"D.J.'s just as much of a reason why I've reached this decision. She was awesome after Mom died, she filled in so well. I used your example, Deej, and I helped Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky out a lot with Nicky and Alex, then their other kids and Joey's. Then, Cassie, Mandy and I sort of took the reins of your babysitting business with your friends, Steph." The way our family had helped with friends was awesome. Everyone always loved how close we were when they came over.

"Well, I've decided I want to make this my life. I don't know where things will go with Jeff and I - I hope they keep getting better. However, I do know I'm going into early childhood education, and opening a home daycare." I grinned at Dad. "And, if you don't mind, Dad, I'd love to have it here at home."

Dad looked ready to burst, he was so happy. And, he noted that there would always be a demand, whereas Jesse and Joey might have to change stations if the station moved any further toward the worse modern stuff. They would move to KLD-AM in a couple years. "I guess I don't need to fret my last little girl moving out after all."

"Oh, don't worry, Danny," Uncle Joey joked. "You won't be losing a daughter; you'll be gaining a Romper Room full of kids."

Stephanie – Oct., 2003 – Steve Tanner Helps Cubs to Series title:[658]

[658] As noted concerning Steve Tanner, back in the TV Universe section, 2003 is best for a Cubs world title, but 2007 or 2008 (or even 2009) are possible, so it's vaguer about when the Cubs win with Colin there, and

Today was the Cubs' first World Series title since 1908, when Papouli would have been a month old. Dad's show tried to find people who had even been born in 1908 who were watching as the Cubs won. Our knuckleballing cousin was 18-10 during the regular season that year, and got a couple wins in the playoffs before the team beat the Yankees in six games. Our family was celebrating for quite a while

Jesse – May, 2005 – How Samantha, Colin Stay In Touch:

Modern technology was amazing; Samantha and Colin could communicate even if they were half way around the world. Colin shared something cool today; he wouldn't be eligible for the draft till after his junior year, but he already had scouts looking at him. He would probably come out only after his senior year, but he could finish early.

Steve Tanner had figured out how to focus almost solely on that knuckleball and make it work to stick in the big leagues. The Cubs were learning some of their starters had arms made of balsa wood. But, Steve was a very reliable starter who could relieve between starts some, the knuckleball put relatively little strain on the arm.

Steve had kept in touch with us, and he recommended Colin to the Cubs. That's how Colin ended up with that organization later.

Joey – June, 2005 - Samantha, other pros; agents:

Justin was in college now, Wendy would be in high school a few more years, and Robin was just about to enter Kindergarten. I had a full family myself. But, nothing compared to the joy of seeing the girl who saw me as a father figure graduate high school this year. Because, while she'd done a fair amount of ballet in high school, this was the big day. Samantha was going to be able to be a real pro.

I'll admit, I went a bit overboard – I was telling my agent about her after she went to New York. I told Danny I'd been hanging aroud him too long. Seriously, he really did great for me. I'd signed on with the agent I did as a comedian because he was young, too. He was a really nice guy who wouldn't have signed the top guys himself right away. As a comedian, I was a lot like Steve Tanner, or like Colin, guys who were just good enough to be in the majors. I didn't stand out so much the big-time agents rushed to represent me.

It takes a lot of hard work and determination to separate from the pack. Steve did pretty well because of the knuckleball, Colin because he was a lefthanded reliever with a lot of guts, and me because of my impressions. Those things separated us from the other guys, and let us have some accomplishments as pros, even though we never became superstars or anything. And, some, like Jesse, choose to represent themselves.

Samantha was different, of course. She was the kind who could shoot to the top. My agent liked to stay small, not getting in feisty battles with the big players. Same with Steve Tanner's sports agent – a nice guy who understood putting family before money. That's why Colin signed with him when he turned pro. But, Samantha could have signed with a more aggressive talent agency, if she'd wanted.

Instead, she chose mine, because she needed a nice guy who totally understood all

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his world title is with the Indians, as mentioned in one Sam Series story. It's possible that they don't win in 2003, and 2008 or 2009 is the year the Cubs win their first pennant and World Series in decades. However, with Steve Tanner there, as noted, a 2003 victory is very likely, as the knuckleballer helps in a number of ways, up to forestalling a trade or two. So, canon is a Cubs win in 2003 with a pennant in '07-'09. Entries about them are from one of them, and Colin definitely proposes in 2009 and marries Samantha in 2010; and wins a Series elsewhere, too.

her concerns. Not that some of the aggressive ones don't, but sometimes it seems like they put money first. He understood there were a lot more important things in life, and adhered to her wishes each time, since we signed with him when she was younger. That's why, as an adult, she signed her own contract with him, and why I'd stayed with him.

Stephanie - Samantha Turns Pro:

I'd always wondered what it would be like. I mean, I'd heard how our cousin Steve felt, and Dad had interviewed plenty of athletes. But, seeing Samantha sign to perform with one of the top ballet companies in the world was just so amazing! I had goose bumps all over. My lilttle girl was signing a pro contract!

I realized she was so good, she probably could have been a ballerina regardless; but it would have been such a difficult road. As Uncle Jesse had said, though, because of me, she had a chance to lead a normal life, to know she was loved unconditionally, and to just experience all the greatest things life could give her with her talents.

Of course, she still had some struggles, but she'd overcome so much!

Michelle - Preparing Samantha for her first pro tour:

Samantha and I were alone in our room. I was helping her pack.

"I'm sure you'll want this." I held up Mr. Snuggle Bunny.

Samantha chuckled. "Yeah, I think so." She closed her eyes for s econd. "They all understand." I put an arm around her. "I just can't thank you, Stephanie, everyone enough for all you've done!" We embraced.

"It's been our pleasure."

"I know it's been hard for you to understand," she said. "Even after I was seeing Dr. Steiner, you were all like, 'You know, we know how you feel, we miss our mom the same way.' But, at least you'd gotten to know her. Well, you didn't, Michelle, but you had D.J. being proactive, and everyone else." I agreed, hoping she wasn't starting to feel down again. Thankfully, she continued. "I'm so glad I've always had you guys."

As I helped her pack, and put Mr. Snuggle Bunny in her carry on bag, I said, "I wish I could come with you all the time. But, we'll be out to see you sometimes."

"That's okay, Michelle. Colin and your cousin Steve say no family follows their kid from ballpark to ballpark." We laughed. "That would get kind of weird, anyway."

"Although there's a few who could use their moms watching over them all the time. I'm glad you do so well on your own," I complimented her as Steph entered the room. "I guess it's just like Steph says. A parent's job is to give their kids wings to fly." She could tell Steph and I were getting a little choked up.

"Thanks for the wings," she said, as we all hugged.

Jesse - Nov. 2005 – A special Thanksgiving:

The great thing about modern technology is, it let Samantha keep in touch with all of us. There's nothing like being together, though. It's a good thing Thanksgiving came when it did; she'd be leaving again right afterward to do the Nutcracker the whole month of December, in London, England.

Everyone, especially Steph, Michelle, and her, embraced incredibly when she got off the plane. "It's been so exciting," she said joyfully. She couldn't stop talking about it.

She had tons of pictures. Digital cameras had begun to be quite popular, and she'd

sent us some before, but those and the videos were still great treats.

They spent some time alone after the festivities; Steph, Michelle, and Samantha. They had lots of fun lounging in Michelle's room, like old times. "I hope we always have special times like this," Samantha said with a smile.

"You bet we will. You know our family; we won't have to wait to Heaven to have glorious reunions," Stephanie pledged.

"It seems like a long time away sometimes, huh?" Michelle asked.

"Not as much as it would. I mean, I can talk to you guys and all. Although, I do have a coulpe dozen friends I'd like to see while I'm in town," she remarked.

She gave us a possible itinerary for next year, too. I think she knew there was one special place we'd all want to so, and she was right. In July, she'd be in Greece.

D.J. – July, 2006 - The Greece Trip:

What an awesome time we had, finally getting to see our ancestral home. Except for Jesse, who had been here almost 30 years earlier, none of us had ever visited Greece; except, of course, through the computer.

We'd have come anyway, just for a chance to see it, at some point around this time, I imagine. But, when we heard Samantha would be performing ballet here, we just had to plan our summer vacation here.

Danny – Food, etc.:

I was in awe of the ancient ruins, though at the same time I said, "This is what happens over thousands of years when you don't keep things clean." Jesse, of course, reminded me it was thousands of years, not thousands of hours.

I also enjoyed cooking; I'd had a love for interesting dishes, though the family didn't always love them. So, Joey and Michelle's now fiancé, Jeff, decided to trick me; they found some dolmades. That's a Middle Eastern dish that contains meat and spices and such wrapped up in one of two things. One is grape leaves, the more common one, and what people usually have in Greece. Joey had given me the other.

"You know you're eating seaweed?" Jeff asked with a straight face.

When it was confirmed, I was stunned. "Seaweed? This was once in the ocean?!" I stared at it for a minute, then commented more lowly, "Of course, it isn't bad." I ate the rest of the one I had, and then asked if I could have some with just grape leaves.

Joey and Suzie's boy, Robin, would be going into first grade. He kind of liked eating the seaweed ones, just so he could, in his words, "Tell girls back home and see their reaction." Joey agreed with me – like father, like son.

Michelle – On Pam not being there, Melina, other relatives:

Samantha walked up to Steph before her first performance. "Thinking about your mom?" Samantha inquired, sensing the answer. We were proud of how she thought of others so much. She'd found great translators and guides for us.

"A little. I know she's in a better place, but still, it would have been nice if she and Dad could have afforded to come while she was alive," Steph said.

"I know she'd love it. 'Cause, I think she'd be just like you," Samantha told her.

"Thanks." Some of Papouli's relatives came in, and we introduced Larissa, Melina, and others. That nurse Melina's dad had married was really super. They had a

couple teenage children themselves. Melina still looked somewhat like a black-haired Michelle, but not nearly like she did when they were three. Since our family had met Papouli, it didn't seem that unusual thinking of relatives far away, especially with e-mail and things, which we'd used before this.

Everyone had so much fun. Samantha's ballet performances were awesome. She'd slowed down in high school to concentrate on studies, but this was her profession, so she didn't take a full load in college. She just took a few courses at a time, and paid attention to ballet while she was young enough. Online courses were made for her; she ended up with a degree in English, specializing in writing for children.

D.J.:

Steph thought about Mom sometimes, just like Dad or Uncle Jesse, but it never got any of us down by this point. Everyone had a great time. Jesse and Joey did a live call-in report for their radio show. The history amazed the adults the most. The kids – Jesse and Joey's – mostly liked swimming and other kid stuff, but that's to be expected at that age. Kimmy and Duane were elsewhere, but Jeff came along.

Jeff would be in broadcasting, but he wanted more experience hanging around younger kids, with what Michelle wanted to do. He also wasn't into history like the others. He and Steve or Michelle or someone took the kids to the stuff that was more on their age level, though we got them to some other places, too.

It was a great family trip that allowed us all to spend time together, something that didn't happen as much, with people moving out and having their own lives. Steph had even gone on a short term missions trip, but only in our country, to Los Angeles, like Michelle did with the youth group; the soup kitchen and other things had caused them to enjoy giving of themselves to help the less fortunate, and telling of Christ's love..

Becky – Sept., 2006 – Jesse and Joey's show, Danny's station:

After a little over a year on their new station, KLD-AM, Jesse and Joey finally were moved up to the morning drive time slot; a fellow who was nearly 65 was retiring. It was in an opposite direction driving from where they'd worked before, but they were happy, that was the important part. They were charting a course of their own.

As for Danny and I, the show survived – and would be taken over by Michelle's future husband, Jeff, one day – because of the switch to a network once known as Pax, now called "i". Of course, Joey, Jeff, and quite a few others have gotten a lot of mileage out of jokes like, "Oh, you're the network?" "No, I am not the network, the network is 'i.'" And so on. But, it's been nice; lots of infomercials, but quality programming, too; just about all one could find for a while, till a revival broke out later.

The important part was that we were all making it through with the great love and wholesomeness we always did, as the next generation of Tanners began.

Stephanie – Oct., 2007 – Kimmy gives birth, and copying:

I really felt sorry for Kimmy. It was rough to see her struggle with the confusion of pregnancy. It would have been so much easier if D.J. had given birth first. Kimmy had nobody to copy off of with anything. Not that Kimmy had copied everything of D.J.'s; teachers would have gotten too suspicious. D.J. had taught her how to copy only enough, but even then, Kimmy had tried to copy enough to even copy D.J.'s name!

I think Kimmy was trying to wait till one of us had a kid, but she couldn't. "My biological clock is ticking," she told D.J. when she learned she was pregnant, "and it just woke me up. I guess there's some sort of an alarm in those things."

Her parents weren't always really supportive. But, she had some people she trusted. Joey's wife, Suzie, was the latest to have had a baby, with Robin being born back in 2000; Uncle Jesse and Aunt Becky's other two were adopted.

Kimmy decided this would be her only one. "I wouldn't have time for more," she announced once. When asked what would happen if she did get pregnant again, she said, "I'll manage. After all, I'm leaving them with Michelle to watch, anyway. I just won't take a couple years off with another one."

Kimmy did take a couple years off from her salon job. We'd emphasized how important those first couple years had been for Michelle. She tried hard to raise her baby, but she was very lazy. Duane wasn't much better. He'd become more verbal, but he had problems, too. He could do plumbing, but he'd been lucky to go into that with his dad.

Kimmy:

We used a few different sitters, mostly in D.J.'s family. I told them I planned to give Michelle great practice, and I did.

Samantha was too busy dancing ballet now to really be involved in babysitting. By the time she retired, I'd ignored enough that my girl was a serious manipulator. However, Michelle was able to straighten things out pretty well.

I was just glad July didn't have Duane's or my problems. She was a bit slower in school, but that was all. She wouldn't try to slack off and give my kind of weird answers. I once wrote "New York City" on a math quiz. Michelle made her do all her homework, found excellent tutors for me to help her a few times, and got her to where she actually went to college and got a degree!

I told her when she graduated that I was so proud to have a nerd for a daughter. She was so used to my strangeness by that time, she really appreciated it. Michelle and the others helped us learn to be hugging all the time and stuff, too, just like them.

Joey – Colin's baseball career:

The Cubs won their first World Series since 1908 this decade. They'd last won a pennant in 1945, before Steve Tanner joined them, and helped them win the World Series in 2003. It was on his suggestion that the Cubs scouted and eventually drafted Colin.

Colin was a lefthanded reliever, in the majors after injuries even this September, he'd been good enough in college to be drafted as a junior; he was close to graduating and easily do sid this winter. They'd needed a lefty. He'd be on their 40 man roster when they were making the 2008 playoffs, and be up in the majors for good in 2009. He threw a few innings in the League Championship Series one year.

Colin would win a World Series with Cleveland a few years later, retiring after 2018 to spend time writing and being with family. He'd majored in English, and he and Samantha wrote and illustrated childrens' books.

A local sportswriter Danny knew had done a Stanford baseball book, with a chapter on each player. It come out a few months ago, after all had graduated. Colin titled his chapter, "The Love of My Life." He intertwined baseball and the true love of his life, Samantha, into a delightful web from their first meeting to that point, with flashbacks to

his youth thrown in, as well.

It was a delightful love story. It didn't sell a lot - unlike books of the Cubs' main stars - but it nonetheless made a great read about how a ballplayer decides on colleges (or whether to turn pro, though Colin's Stanford scholarship made it easy), progresses through the ranks, anticipates the major league draft, learns the tricks of the trade, and balances all of that with family and a special sweetheart who needed lots of tender loving care. He was cautious not to reveal too much, as there was much Samantha wanted kept secret about her feelings and early life, but readers could tell he had a heart for Samantha like few others. An epilogue about their marriage was added at the end.

Danny - June 16, 2009 – Colin proposes to Samantha:

Michelle and Jeff - married in the summer of 2008 - had recently had their first child, a baby boy named Jesse Joseph. Today, Colin stopped over. He was with the big league team, the Cubs, as he'd been since late last year. They were out in San Francisco. He wanted to talk to Stephanie, who had married a nice young fellow named Robert whom she met in college. And, Steph wanted me to talk to Colin and her.

I had a feeling I knew why Colin and Stephanie were here.

"DadColinwantstomarrySamanthaand…" Stephanie stopped and laughed. This was so like her mother. "Well, anyway, I figured you could ask him any questions I don't think about, if you know what I mean."

Stephanie was actually very thorough. She knew some players' wives and girlfriends had accepted Samantha into their family of sorts, and none of them bothered her with sordid tales of what some guys did. Colin stayed far away from that stuff.

By the time someone reached Triple-A and the majors, players knew who was into that and who would rather have the family over for a cookout and only wanted to hear about wholesome stuff. So, they all respected Colin and Samantha.

I managed to interject a few things, but I told Steph I was satisfied. She was, too. He proposed to her in New York late in the month, an afternoon date before she performed ballet that night and he had a game. She said "yes."

Samantha and Colin would share the same fabulous spirit Pam and I had, and that Jesse and Joey and their wives had. Samantha lived past 90, dying a great grandmother with her daughters and son by her side as she joined her family and friends in the peace of eternity. She outlived Michelle by only a couple weeks, failing fast once Michelle passed away, the last of the Tanner sisters to pass away.

Stephanie - Jan. 10, 2010 – Her first baby:

One reason I got so excited when Colin asked my permission to ask Samantha to marry him was that I'd learned just a few days earlier our adoption request had gone through. Today, Pamela came to us – "Gotcha Day" would come in a couple years when it was finalized. I beat D.J. by a little over a year. She'd done loads of traveling and sightseeing, and had lots of good, clean fun, and had been trying for a couple years to have a baby. It's harder once a person passes thirty, but after Elizabeth Jane Hale - E.J. for short - she would have another around ten years later, something perhaps not as likely when our mom was around, having a child in one's forties.

Robert and I, over the next eleven years, adopted six children in total, a brother and a sister inone case. Samantha's problems had inspired me to want to help as many as

I could, just like D.J. did.

Jesse - Feb. 11, 2010:

Samantha and Colin would marry Valentine's Day, just before he went to spring training with the Cubs. It was a fantastic feeling, one that seems easier to reach in some ways - more teammates helping you - and harder in others than the tops in music. He'd earned something I never had, and I was very proud of him. He'd promised Samantha to only stay in till he earned a pension, then retire. He knew Samantha didn't want to spend gobs of money, and he'd be bringing home huge paychecks on top of Samantha's pay with the San Francisco Ballet, one of the best in the world.

Not only that, but there was Samantha's trust fund and the money they'd make once they retired, when Samantha and Colin would start writing childrens' books.

As for Becky and me, we had two natural and two adopted children who were simply wonderful. We might have even adopted another, we fell in love with onoe girl Steph adopted; we'd have called her Pamela, but she had one with that name.

Becky was almost fifty, kind of old for a female in TV. She could have stayed on, but would elect to retire in 2013 after 25 years on "Wake Up, San Francisco."

D.J. – Samantha's career:

That was still a lot longer than ballerinas perform, of course. They can perform at a superstar level till age 30, but 25 is much more common for them to start to retire, and even the best start to decline after age 30. Here, at almost 23, she knew she had a few more years left, and wanted to make the most of them, as she didn't want to think about a decline; she wanted to make sure she went out on top.

It was still a great match; she and Colin spoke all the time, and always had fun stories to tell each other about life on the road. They managed to find time to get together at times like ll-Star Weekend, or when his team was near where she was performing. Winter was also very important for them.

She loved the friendships she'd made, but after a few years, she could tell her muscles were getting a little older. She probably could have trained more and stayed in shape till 30, but she longed for home, too. She could name her price as far as teaching somewhere, so she settled down here, where Steph also volunteered to teach part time when she wasn't helping to raise her own kids. That was in late winter of 2015. She found out she was pregnant soon thereafter, and had her baby around when schools tarted. She said then that she was glad to still be dancing some, but was really glad to be away from all the travel. I imagine it can really take a toll on someone; the travel and wanting to take care of the baby were other big reasons she retired from performing full-time when she did.

She and Colin would have a few kids, with her getting quite close to some of the players' wives, and of course staying close to us. She never got lonely in those few years till Colin retired; players' wives tend to be as closely knit as the players, anyway, and by the time Samantha had decided to retire, Colin was a free agent and signed with a Bay Area team that needed a lefty reliever. He'd remain there the rest of his career. Though it was Oakland, he still lived close enough he could drive to the ballpark.

She still had so many activities, along with helping to teach ballet part time, that she enjoyed. And, even if Colin didn't do them much before – I don't think he'd ever

been on a horse till she took him one offseason – he got the hang of them quickly. Aunt Becky had become a volunteer there by then.

Becky:

I'd always loved horses. I got a job helping out at the stables, owned by Michelle's friend Denise Chow and her uncle. Denise helped out there a lot, and she and I could help kids learn to ride.

That meant Danny got a new co-host till he retired for good a couple years later. Who was it? None other than Michelle's husband, Jeff. His sense of humor was better than Danny's, who sometimes tried too hard. Jeff was just as sweet and compassionate underneath as Jesse, as warm and filled with hugs as Danny, and as silly as Joey could be at times. It's no wonder Michelle loved him so much, and vice versa. They say women tend to marry their fathers; she married someone who was a little bit of all three.

Joey:

Around when Samantha and Colin married, Kimmy dropped July off for the first time at Michelle's. No, she didn't drop a month off, July was named because Kimmy and Duane each liked the month, and the names April through June were taken. Of course, July was born in October, but things like that got lost on Kimmy sometimes.

I anxiously awaited Samantha's first child, but that would come only once Samantha slowed her ballet career. In the meantime, Wendy had gone to Chicago, as had Allie years earlier. Wendy interned with Big Idea, later working for them full time. They produce VeggieTales, among other things. My entire family was in comedy. Once our son Robin graduated from high school, Suzie and I planned to move down to southern California, and semi-retire while working for someplace that did cartoons.

That wouldn't be till 2018, when our boy Robin graduated high school and went to college; we wanted to stay here till then. For now, we had lots of fun celebrating.

Of course, Kimmy and Duane were so weird and ignored so much that July gave Michelle quite a few problems at times. Although, to be fair, they tried, but Kimmy and Duane could each be tricked pretty easily.

Michelle:

Fortuntately, Kimmy understood how easily they could be tricked, which was why they relied on me, when July was still unable to really grasp how easily she could trick them. Kimmy let me handle July however I thought best, and I tried everything to get her to behave. It broke my heart a few times when I had to get really tough on July. It wasn't nearly as bad as Samantha's case, but Kimmy just couldn't copy off of D.J. very well. July had a much different temperament than I had had. She even had a worse one than I might have if I'd taken after Uncle Jesse. At least Steph's experiences with Samantha early gave me someone to talk to about July, a person who had fought those same types of battles, if not for the same reason.

I had two boys, Jesse and Jeffy, and lots of kids to whom I was Miss Michelle and even Nanny. I was more than that to July, though. And, by the time she was a preteen, July had matured into a wonderful young lady who would one day be a wonderful mother herself. She even thought of me as a mom, in some ways, though I think very close aunt would be more like it. And, I always told her to respect Kimmy, because even though she

was a little odd, she was still a pretty nice mom.

Part of the problem was the match – I think she expected Duane to do more, where someone who left her for long stretches, she'd know she had to do it all herself. Plus, she had her own hair salon and so got into the gossip game and didn't focus on raising July herself – and thus turning to D.J. – like she would have. Plus, she probably got a bit lazy since July wasn't born till 2007.

So, it just boils down to Kimmy being a bit lazier than she might have been, though she was still a great friend and mother.

Still, despite how wild July was a few times, it was fun getting Mother's Day cards from July, just like I got special things from quite a few of the families I helped. We don't really remember particular Mother's Days or Father's Days, because they were all so special, filled with the most important part. We knew it wasn't the gifts, it was the love you feel. And, I can't imagine anyone could have a more special one than that Mother's Day we gave D.J. way back when.

Stephanie Sept. 8, 2015:

I was so proud of Michelle. She was touching many lives with how she handled things. I don't know where Kimmy could have found a sweeter sitter.

I knew the young lady I was meeting in the hospital would be a great mom, too.

"Almost 25 years together, Stephanie. Can you believe it?"

"We've made a great team, Samantha." I held her hand as the labor pains intensified. "Colin should be getting here any minute, he caught a flight as soon as he could," I reassured her.

As we waited in the delivery room, we discussed our wonderful family, and how good things would be. She'd have some trouble putting her firstborn in timeout right away, but Colin would when he was home, and Michelle and I would help in that. And, it figures that the things were when she was little, she'd want to really coddle her. The bond wouldn't break, though, just because she sat her little girl in the corner. Thankfully, she'd never have to get very tough with any of her kids.

Colin rushed in when the contractions were at two minutes. Joey was here, too. Colin passed Joey a quizzical look. Joey said, "How far apart are the contractions? 'Let's' was a contraction, and Stephanie said 'Here's Colin' when you came in ten seconds ago, and 'here's' is a contractin. So, they're about ten seconds apart."

I had to laugh. "I expect that complex a joke from Jeff. Although I guess you've told them, too. Many times," I reminisced fondly.

Joey told Samantha to remember her courage hangy ball - he'd told her that thing in the back of her throat was one of those when we'd been with her before her tonsillectomy when she was eight.

Samantha screamed again, and began to push. The doctor and nurses got into position, and soon, out came a healthy baby girl - Michelle Courtney.

We all wept, not just at the beautiful miracle of birth, but in the fabulous miracle that had allowed this scared and scarred little girl to turn into a fabulous and graceful ballerina. She'd matured into a compassionate and caring lady that even reminded me of Mom in the wonderful way in which she would love and cherish family all the days of her life, and mold her kids into wonderful people, with the same great tradition of unconditional love that we'd always shared.

I considered Mom, and what she must be thinking from up above as Samantha and Colin gazed warmly at their newborn. Our mom may not have lived to see things here on earth. But her love, her goodness, her warmth, had been felt by many, even without knowing or remembering her.

Yes, Samantha and Colin would have troubles, but so did Mom and Dad. And yet, Mom and Dad refused to define happiness by whether they had money in the bank, or a place of their own, or whether plans or promises had had gone awry, or hearts had been broken. Those were mere circumstances.

Like them, Samantha and Colin realized that circumstances can change, but that we can choose to remain committed to feeling affection and warmth for each other, even in the midst of strife and turmoil. That, to them, would be true happiness. And, in so doing, they could rise above those, knowing better times lay ahead, in Heaven where each knew they'd go if not here. And, they would get through those tough times, just as we did after Mom's death. Just as we always would.

Samantha and Colin smiled proudly as they looked upon their beautiful baby, and contemplated that fabulous future that lay ahead. Filled with faith in Christ's love for them and ability to overcome obstacles and give them that wonderful hope, they ventured into that bright future, full of promise, and committed to showing their children the incredible warmth, love, and happiness we Tanners had showered upon Samantha.