

"SMALL FLYERS"

Written by:
Jim Boston

1312 N. 48th Ave., #324
Omaha, NE 68132
402 556-3340
Huskercyclone@netzero.net
9-11-2021

FADE IN:

EXT. LIBERTY CAFE - NIGHT

SUPER: ALBUQUERQUE, NM, 1-1-1946

This smallish downtown building features a huge yellow-and-red, T-shaped neon sign.

INT. LIBERTY CAFE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

THE JOINT IS JUMPIN'!

CUSTOMERS OF ALL AGES occupy four out of every five seats in this busy eatery. Most men wear suits and ties; most women wear dresses. Some folks prefer their old military uniforms.

But everyone grooves to the MUSIC from a jukebox.

A few banners add to the festive atmosphere. One says: "HAPPY NEW YEAR 1946!" Another says: "WE SALUTE OUR GI'S. THEY'RE THE BEST!"

At a back-to-back-to-back table setup, ROMAN EVANS (33, quiet, humble), his wife TRUDY (33, perky), and their daughters SHIRLEY (11, sweet, gentle; incredibly cute) and FRANCES "FRANNY" (10, rambunctious, gung-ho) all chow down.

ROMAN

(to Franny and Shirley)

How do you like the Russian caviar?

SHIRLEY

Daddy, I could eat this every day.

Franny shakes her head "yes."

TRUDY

If we had the money, we could have Russian caviar every single day.

FRANNY

(through bites)

You know...I can't get over the enchiladas with the fried egg on top.

ROMAN

Well, Franny...that's the Liberty Cafe for you.

On one side of the Evanses, CLIFF RHINER (40, philosophical) eats steak while he watches Franny and Shirley.

CLIFF

Franny...that's the reason your daddy and I and so many other daddies went to war. So that people could come here and order enchiladas with a fried egg on top.

SHIRLEY

Makes sense to me, Mr. Rhiner.

ELIJAH PETERS (55, anxious, Black), his wife HARRIET (51, suspicious), and their daughter RACHEL (11, driven) sit on the Evanses' other side.

Not one single plate or utensil rests on the Peterses' table.

ELIJAH

Harriet, how long we been here?

HARRIET

(checking her watch)

Half an hour...same as the Evanses and Mr. Rhiner.

ELIJAH

Now you two know that I didn't fight in both world wars to keep putting up with this garbage.

RACHEL

And everybody says this is the place to eat here in Albuquerque.

Rachel rises from her seat.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

I'm gonna see if I can find the manager.

HARRIET

Rachel, honey...sit down. Won't do you any good.

A reluctant Rachel returns to her seat...as EDDIE PITLOCK (35, prickly) enters the cafe with wife BETTIE (34, levelheaded). Roman waves at Bettie and Eddie.

ROMAN

Eddie! Bettie! Glad you could make it tonight!

BETTIE

Thanks, Roman!

TRUDY
 (gesturing)
 We saved you two Pitlocks a seat.

FRANNY
 (to Eddie)
 I wanna hear about those one
 hundred and fourteen missions you
 flew.

Eddie and Bettie move toward the back-to-back-to-back tables.

SHIRLEY
 Mr. and Mrs. Pitlock, we'd like you
 to meet some friends of ours from
 down the street.

The Pitlocks fill up an empty seat each.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
 Rachel and Mr. and Mrs.
 Peters...we'd like you to meet Mr.
 and Mrs. Pitlock.

Harriet and Bettie shake hands...but Eddie grabs Bettie and
 yanks her away from the three tables.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
 Rachel and I are in the sixth--

EDDIE
 Bettie, we gotta go.

Cliff and his remaining tablemates watch Eddie and Bettie
 (the latter lodges AD LIBBED protests) walk away.

CLIFF
 (hoisting his glass)
 Who wants to drink a toast?

ELIJAH
 With what?

RACHEL
 That's it!
 (rises from her seat)
 I'm gonna find somebody--

When Rachel steps away from the tri-table setup, MARLENE
 BOOZELL (40s), a food server, approaches the throng.

Rachel sits back down.

MARLENE
Hey, everybody, how's the food?

A few heads nod.

ELIJAH
We didn't get any food!

HARRIET
(points to Marlene)
We didn't get any menus!

RACHEL
Or glasses or spoons or knives or
forks!

SHIRLEY
They're absolutely right.

Marlene looks chagrined...embarrassed.

MARLENE
I'm so sorry...we're so sorry.
(to the Peterses)
I'll go grab you some menus.

CLIFF
You'd better, Marlene. 'Cause if
you don't, the next tip you're
gonna get will be a filter tip.

Now Marlene heads for a station to grab three menus.

MARLENE
(along the way)
What in the world's a filter tip?

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

At last, Cliff, Elijah, Franny, Harriet, Rachel, Roman, Shirley, and Trudy eat together.

CLIFF
(raises his glass)
Here's to the new year...a year
where the United States hopefully
won't have to go back to war.

The eight tablemates click their glasses, then drink.

CLIFF (CONT'D)
Now...who's got a wish?

The three children and five adults eyeball each other a while...then:

FRANNY

I'd like to fly a plane...just like
Daddy did.

Fourteen eyes stare at Franny...Shirley turns to Roman.

SHIRLEY

Me, too.

Cliff spits out his drink...Roman's face freezes.

MAIN TITLES APPEAR OVER ACTION.

Trudy tries to rouse her husband.

EXT. EVANSES' HOUSE - DAY

This is a smallish abode in Albuquerque's Huning Highlands Addition area.

A 1935 Ford four-door sedan rests in the gravel driveway...despite the presence of a garage in back.

INT. EVANSES' KITCHEN - DAY

A table makes this already-intimate space even cozier.

Trudy, Roman, Shirley, and Franny sit at that table, where they eat pancakes and sausage.

SHIRLEY

(eyeballing Franny)

May I have the syrup, please?

FRANNY

Surely...of course you may,
Shirley.

Franny passes a bottle of syrup to Shirley, who all but drowns her pancakes in the sweet stuff.

TRUDY

Shirley...save some of that syrup
for the rest of us.

Shirley stops pouring. She sets the bottle on the table.

SHIRLEY

Okay, Mama.

ROMAN

So...you two daughters wanna take up flying.

(takes a bite of sausage)

I just hope you know what you're both getting into.

FRANNY

Well, Daddy, you set the example. You flew forty missions in Europe.

ROMAN

Seventy-four fewer missions than Mr. Pitlock.

SHIRLEY

But those forty missions still helped win the war.

(takes a sip)

And what better way to honor you than by following in your footsteps and doing what made you famous?

Roman blushes.

ROMAN

You really wanna spend fifteen months in a German stalag like I did?

FRANNY

No, Daddy...Shirley and I just wanna be pilots.

Trudy downs her juice, then turns to Roman.

TRUDY

When they found out you were gonna join the Army Air Corps, the children started clipping out articles about pilots.

Roman's and Trudy's daughters nod.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

And saved 'em in a scrapbook.

SHIRLEY

The biggest scrapbook they make.

Roman looks lost.

FRANNY

Don't worry, Daddy. We clipped out articles about Allied pilots.

SHIRLEY

(through bites)
Only Allied pilots.

ROMAN

It's all well and good that you two wanna take up flying.

(takes a sip of coffee)
But don't you two think you should learn how to drive first?

Shirley and Franny eye each other...Franny looks to Roman.

FRANNY

Don't you remember the weekend after you came home from the war?

Roman shakes his head "yes."

TRUDY

(pointing to Roman)
All four of us went to those stables southwest of town.

FRANNY

And I got to drive a horse and buggy.

SHIRLEY

Franny...I think Daddy meant we should learn how to drive a car first.

ROMAN

That's just what I meant.

FRANNY

Well, Daddy...a car has a lot of horsepower.

Trudy and Shirley erupt in laughter.

EXT. EDITH BOULEVARD, SOUTHEAST - DAY

Books in hand, Franny and Shirley walk toward school.

SHIRLEY

You still got last year's issues of "Popular Mechanics," Franny?

FRANNY

All twelve of 'em, Shirl. Down in the basement.

SHIRLEY

Let's get 'em out of the basement and put 'em in our bedroom so we can study all the articles about airplanes.

FRANNY

And cars.

SHIRLEY

Good idea!

FRANNY

Thanks...and besides, Daddy did tell us we need to learn everything we can about planes.

SHIRLEY

And cars.

The Evans sisters rearrange their books in order to walk arm in arm to:

EXT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL - DAY

This sprawling, two-story Jazz Age structure looks more like a mission in California or Texas.

INT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Shirley, Rachel, and THIRTY OTHER SIXTH-GRADERS sing in their seats while teacher KATHRYN PSALTIS (33, clever, innovative; say "SALT is") strums a guitar at the front of the class.

FULL CLASS

This land is your land. This land is my land./From California to the New York island,/From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters,/This land was made for you and me.

A smiling Kathryn ends her accompaniment with a flourish.

KATHRYN

Very good, class! That's the way to belt it out!

Some students whoop it up; others just eye one another.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
Now...anybody got a question?

Dead silence for a few seconds...then ALAN COHOON (11) raises his hand.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
Uh, yes, Alan?

ALAN
Miss Psaltis, you're a real good guitar player.

KATHRYN
Why, thank you...it's very sweet of you to say that.

ALAN
I was just wondering, though...how come you don't play the piano?

Kathryn sets her guitar aside and strokes her chin.

KATHRYN
To tell you the truth, I never really thought about that...I guess, ever since I was your age, I felt I could do more with six strings than I could with eighty-eight keys.

Alan nods while he flashes a smile.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
Alan, I'll tell you what: We've got a student right here in this room who's a mighty fine pianist.

Students gaze at each other.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
Shirley Evans...would you like to honor us with a song?

Shirley receives stares from half the class.

SHIRLEY
Aw, what the heck?

HERBERT "SONNY" KREITLING (12) and SALLY JO GOODSON (11), who flank Alan, watch Shirley stroll to the front of the class.

SONNY
 (to Alan)
 The girl who wants to fly.

SALLY JO
 Button it up, Sonny!

Shirley locates a 1900-29 upright piano. She almost sits down at it when she turns to Kathryn.

SHIRLEY
 Before I get started, Miss Psaltis,
 there's just one thing.

KATHRYN
 What can I do for you?

SHIRLEY
 Could you help me take the music
 rack off the piano?

KATHRYN
 You bet.

Sonny stares in anger at Sally Jo.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

Kathryn and Shirley set the piano's music rack out of harm's way before the latter sits down to tickle the ivories.

The teacher takes a seat at the front of the class.

Shirley's selection: "It Had to Be You" or a similar ballad.

Rachel, Sally Jo, and Alan look impressed...but most of the remaining children look stunned to see the old piano's hammers and strings exposed.

Sonny bolts out of his seat.

SONNY
 I'm...gonna...throw up...

SALLY JO
 Well, don't do it in here!

Half the class watches Sonny sprint out of the room...the other half watches a highly-focused Shirley play those keys.

Kathryn and Rachel pay close attention to Shirley.

Halfway through her tune, Shirley jazzes it up...and brings smiles to Rachel and to Kathryn.

Just about the time Shirley takes the song through its chorus a second time, Sonny lopes his way back to his seat.

Franny's sister exudes loads of fun from the old upright.

Shirley brings her piece to a close with an arpeggio...but only Alan, Kathryn, Rachel, and Sally Jo applaud.

A disappointed Kathryn jumps up from her seat.

KATHRYN
(still clapping)
Come on, class! You can do better
than that!

Two or three...four more students join in the clapping.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
Let's really hear it for Shirley
Evans!

Now all of Shirley's classmates applaud while she makes her way back to her own seat.

RACHEL
(rising from her seat)
Great job, Shirley! You really told
those ivories what to do!

SHIRLEY
Why, thanks, Rachel!

RACHEL
Skin me!

Rachel and Shirley pull off a 1940s-style handshake before both girls sit down.

A few classmates chuckle over the handshake...Sonny looks fit to be tied...Kathryn gestures him to the front of the class.

KATHRYN
It's all right, Sonny.

Sonny wildly shrugs as he trudges to Kathryn's side.

SHIRLEY
Don't worry, Miss Psaltis. I'll
stay after class and help put the
music rack back on the piano.

Kathryn nods with a smile at Shirley.

KATHRYN
 Sonny...I really understand your
 nervousness.

Sonny's mouth flies open.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
 How often do you get to see an
 upright piano's actual innards?

SONNY
 Huh?

KATHRYN
 Mechanism. Hammers and strings.
 (holds Sonny's hands)
 Tell you what you can do next time:
 Just close your eyes.

Now Sonny grins.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
 That way, you won't feel like
 tossing your innards.

SONNY
 What?

KATHRYN
 Throwing up...vomiting.

Alan, Rachel, and Shirley grab the piano's music rack to put
 it back on the instrument. Kathryn rushes over to help.

EXT. SUPERIOR LUMBER COMPANY - DAY

A sprawling space on Albuquerque's southwest side.

Roman's behind the wheel of a forklift truck. He's about to
 lift a stack of two-by-fours from one large pile to another
 space when...he falls asleep.

Cliff sprints over to the forklift.

CLIFF
 Roman...are you all right?

Roman comes to.

ROMAN
 Well, I'll be a...

CLIFF

You were trying to enter those two-by-fours in a trapeze act.

The ex-POW looks embarrassed.

CLIFF (CONT'D)

They're supposed to go on a truck that's heading for the Nob Hill project.

Cliff points Roman to a large, nearby truck whose bed houses another stack of two-by-fours.

Roman shakes his head "yes."

CLIFF (CONT'D)

Tell you what: Just pretend you're on a mission over in the Pacific.

ROMAN

Okay, Cliff...I'm ready to fire.

Cliff watches Roman drive the forklift toward the waiting truck at a faster-than-usual pace.

INT. EVANSES' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Trudy, Shirley, Roman, and Franny pass food around the table.

TRUDY

Hey, everybody...I'm thinking about working on our Victrola so we can hear some records again.

Franny's and Shirley's eyes light up.

Roman looks flabbergasted.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

(to Roman)

Honey, have another biscuit.

Trudy hands a plate of biscuits to Roman, who grabs one from the plate.

ROMAN

Uh...thanks.

TRUDY

I mean, face it: It's been four months now since I last worked at the lumber yard...and no matter how hard I try, I can't seem to get the mechanic out of me.

Roman's and Trudy's daughters shake their heads "yes."

FRANNY

Mama...Daddy...Leonard Carter showed me a surefire way to make paper airplanes.

TRUDY

That boy in your science class who wants to be a chemist?

FRANNY

(through her bites)
That's him.

ROMAN

Well, Franny, I've heard he's really smart.

FRANNY

His planes stay in flight longer than anybody else's in class...so I wrote his instructions down.

SHIRLEY

(eyeballing Franny)
Wouldn't hurt me to write 'em down, too.

(takes a sip)

Daddy...I remember when you told me and Franny about tunnel vision.

Franny nods.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

And how it helped you get through all those bombing missions.

ROMAN

Huh?

(taking a bite)

When was that?

TRUDY

Honey...don't you remember the first time all four of us looked at the scrapbook the kids put together?

Roman slowly nods while Shirley downs her milk.

SHIRLEY

This morning, I had a chance to put tunnel vision to the test.

Six eyes stare at Shirley.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

It was in Miss Psaltis' music class.

ROMAN

I see, Shirl...a music class?

SHIRLEY

Miss Psaltis invited me to play the piano for the other classmembers. She even helped me take the music rack off the piano.

FRANNY

That's Miss Psaltis, all right. Never a dull moment.

SHIRLEY

Anyway, Sonny Kreitling ran outa the music room. He told everybody: "I'm...gonna..."

Shirley takes another bite.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

But I didn't let him bother me...I just kept right on playing.

TRUDY

Good for you, Shirley!

SHIRLEY

Thanks, Mama.

FRANNY

What was Sonny Kreitling gonna do?

SHIRLEY

Franny...I don't wanna tell you
while we're still eating.

(to Roman)

How was your day at the lumber
yard?

Roman stares into space for a few seconds.

ROMAN

(taking a swig)

Well, Shirley...I sure could've
used your tunnel vision.

Shirley's mouth flies open.

INT. FRANNY'S AND SHIRLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It almost looks like a college dorm room, what with its
separate beds and separate desks.

In one corner of the room, Shirley's and Franny's dolls
(every last one of them broken) rest in a large box.

A small bookshelf features issues of "Popular Mechanics."

Big Sis and Little Sis do their homework...but when Franny
finishes her studies, she closes her textbook with a bang.

FRANNY

There. That's it.

Franny pulls a sheet of handwritten instructions from her own
notebook and hands the sheet to Shirley.

SHIRLEY

(accepting sheet)

Now you're talking...thanks!

Shirley takes a clean sheet of paper out of her own notebook,
then copies the instructions onto her own sheet.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

Thank you, Leonard!

Now Franny yanks a clean sheet from her notebook...and folds
the sheet into a paper airplane.

When Shirley finishes copying Leonard's instructions down,
she reaches into her desk for a sheet of paper.

On the paper: An English test where Shirley earned an F.

Franny looks up at Shirley, who transforms the sheet into a paper airplane.

FRANNY

Don't you wanna use a clean piece of paper?

SHIRLEY

Seeing how this was a test Mrs. Earle gave me...

FRANNY

But Mama made you keep that test to teach you a lesson.

Shirley's mouth drops.

SHIRLEY

Oh...that's right.

Now Shirley stuffs the offending sheet back inside her desk...and Franny launches her own paper plane.

It's a dud.

FRANNY

Think I need to shorten the wings.

Franny retrieves her paper plane while Shirley removes a clean piece of paper from her own notebook to fold into something to launch.

INT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Sonny, Shirley, Sally Jo, Rachel, Alan, and TWO DOZEN OTHER SIXTH-GRADERS meet here prior to first period.

At her desk at the front of the class, home room teacher JEANNINE EARLE (57, skeptical) gives announcements.

The blackboard behind her desk shows diagramed sentences.

JEANNINE

And remember, people: Tell your parents we're not collecting grease anymore.

Seated behind Sally Jo, Sonny yanks the former's hair.

JEANNINE (CONT'D)

Herbert, leave Sally Jo's hair alone!

Sally Jo wheels around to show a cringing Sonny her fists...and Sonny pretends innocence.

JEANNINE (CONT'D)
And Sally Jo, keep your fists to yourself! Be a lady!

Sally Jo flashes a cringe of her own as the bell RINGS.

JEANNINE (CONT'D)
People, before first-period grammar begins here in this room, if you need to go to the bathroom, please return here on time.

The rest of the class leaves...turning Rachel, Shirley, and Sonny into the lone students in the room. Those three and Jeannine watch Sally Jo (who exits) breathe a sigh of relief.

JEANNINE (CONT'D)
Shirley...please come up here.

A nodding Shirley saunters up to Jeannine's desk.

SHIRLEY
Don't worry, Mrs. Earle. I'm keeping my grades up.

JEANNINE
True.

Shirley's face shows a wide smile.

JEANNINE (CONT'D)
I've heard that you want to take up...take up...

Jeannine chuckles.

JEANNINE (CONT'D)
I've heard you want to take up flying.

SHIRLEY
Yes. That's correct.

JEANNINE
Aren't you a bit too delicate to be a pilot?

SHIRLEY

Well...actually...my mama told me
and Franny that we can be anything
we wanna be.

JEANNINE

Within reason.

SHIRLEY

But what about Amelia Earhart? And
Bessie Coleman?

JEANNINE

They died.

One by one, the classroom fills up with the other kids.

SHIRLEY

Don't you remember the WASPs? They
flew sixty million miles...and
while they were at it, they freed
male pilots for combat, and--

JEANNINE

Thirty-eight of them died.

SHIRLEY

But--

JEANNINE

You and Frances need to think this
over...and over...and over.

Shirley shrugs on the way back to her seat.

SHIRLEY

(sitting back down)

When Will Rogers and Wiley Post
died in a plane crash, nobody used
that as a reason to have men stop
flying.

Most of the girls in the room applaud Shirley's remark.

INT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL SCIENCE ROOM - DAY

Franny teams up with LEONARD CARTER (10, a thinker, Black)
for an experiment as teacher ROY PLASMAN (69, jovial, White;
Louisiana brogue) looks on with delight.

Leonard, Franny, and Roy stand at the front of the room while
TWO DOZEN OTHER FIFTH-GRADE STUDENTS sit and watch.

ROY
All right, who's got the two iron
wires?

Leonard holds up two iron wires for all to see.

ROY (CONT'D)
Okay, Franny...show me that copper
wire of yours!

Franny shows her classmates and Roy the copper wire in her
grip.

ROY (CONT'D)
Franny, twist one end of the copper
wire and one end of one of the two
iron wires together.

FRANNY
Okay.

Leonard hands Franny one of the two iron wires. She follows
Roy's instruction to the letter.

ROY
That's mighty good.

Franny grins from ear to ear.

ROY (CONT'D)
Now, Leonard, join the other end of
the copper wire with the other iron
wire.

LEONARD
You bet, Mr. Plasman.

Franny gives the combined copper wire-first iron wire to
Leonard, who twists the second iron wire and the copper wire-
first iron wire together.

ROY
That's really good.

Roy gestures Franny and Leonard over to the teacher's desk,
where a volt meter rests.

ROY (CONT'D)
Now...each one of y'all hold one
end of the newly-joined wire...and
we'll git us a readin'.

Roy breaks out a lighter to heat one of the twisted junctions. When he looks satisfied with the result, Roy turns to his two experimenters.

ROY (CONT'D)
Now you two stick your ends into
the volt meter.

Leonard sticks his end of the combined wire into one end of the volt meter while Franny puts her end of the composite wire into the opposite end of the meter.

A nodding Roy reads the voltage OUT LOUD before he gestures to Franny's and Leonard's seated classmates.

ROY (CONT'D)
All right...the rest of y'all,
c'm'up here and git around the
desk.

The other students scurry to Roy's desk, where as many as possible get a look at the combined wire and the volt meter.

ROY (CONT'D)
Okay, everybody...what did Franny
and Leonard just git through
showin'?

Dead silence...for a few seconds.

VIRGINIA BRECHLER (10, bashful) inches her hand up.

ROY (CONT'D)
Give it a shot, Virginia.

VIRGINIA
Leonard and Franny were
demonstrating thermocouples.

ROY
That's absolutely right...now,
what's the definition of
thermocouples?

VIRGINIA
Well...that's the act of getting
electricity from heat without the
use of moving parts.

Several young heads nod...Franny's and Leonard's nods are the most enthusiastic.

Roy watches VERNON TODMAN (11) raise his own hand.

ROY
All right, Vernon! Shoot!

VERNON
Thermocouples take advantage of an
electrical effect that happens
where different metals meet.

Roy shakes his head "yes."

LEONARD
Yeah, that's right!

FRANNY
Vernon...would you like me and
Leonard to hook this wire up to a
battery?

A grinning Vernon eyeballs his other classmates.

VERNON
What do you expect from a girl who
wants to fly a plane like her daddy
did?

Most of the class explodes in laughter.

EXT. EVANSES' HOUSE - DAY

A car passes by.

INT. EVANSES' KITCHEN - DAY

Trudy sweeps the kitchen floor as a table radio on the
cabinet BLARES OUT "Ma Perkins."

Just as the program's plot thickens, the radio conks out.

Trudy sets her broom down and lunges for the radio.

She bangs on the radio once...twice...a third time.

No sound.

The one-time lumber-yard mechanic unplugs the radio and sets
it on the kitchen table.

She grabs a knife from a drawer to remove the radio's
back...but the knife won't do.

So she runs from the kitchen to the garage...and comes back
with a screwdriver.

The screwdriver works fine...and Trudy notices the culprit: A burned-out tube.

Trudy yanks, unscrews, or solders the tube out of the radio.

TRUDY
 (holds up bad tube)
 That's it. You're not gonna cost me
 any more Oxydol commercials.

Roman's wife heads out the front door.

EXT. SUPERIOR LUMBER COMPANY - DAY

Trudy's husband uses a forklift to transport two-by-fours from a large pile to a waiting (and empty) large truck.

ROMAN
 Fire one!

Roman lands one bunch of two-by-fours into the truck...then goes back to the large pile for more two-by-fours.

Cliff emerges from the Superior Lumber building and watches Roman remove more beams from the large pile.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
 (swings beams onto truck)
 Fire two!

And a new set of two-by-fours lands inside the truck.

Roman moves the forklift back to the big pile of two-by-fours, where he lifts more lumber upward.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
 (loads lumber onto truck)
 Fire three!

As Roman continues to load the truck, Cliff waves his arms to stop the former Army Air Corps pilot.

Roman stops the forklift; Cliff runs over to the forklift.

CLIFF
 Roman, the war's over.

An openmouthed Roman points at Cliff.

ROMAN
 Cliff...didn't you tell me...to
 pretend I was on a bombing mission
 in--

CLIFF
Mission aborted.

ROMAN
But...but...

CLIFF
Time to try a new strategy.

Roman turns the forklift off and shrugs.

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

This is a Pueblo Revival-styled building not too far from the Liberty Cafe...or Eugene Field School.

SOME PEOPLE walk in on this nippy Saturday.

INT. ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC LIBRARY READING AREA - DAY

PEOPLE occupy two out of every three seats in the room.

Jeannine and her husband FRANK EARLE (56, friendly) read today's "Albuquerque Journal" from a table in midroom when Franny and Shirley (both in medium-heavy jackets) arrive.

The two youngest Evanses stroll toward a cabinet of long drawers...when A LIBRARIAN (a woman in her 50s) approaches the twosome.

Result: A quiet conversation.

LIBRARIAN
May I help you two?

SHIRLEY
My sister and I want to learn to fly a plane.

FRANNY
Like our daddy did during the war.

The librarian's mouth flies open.

FRANNY (CONT'D)
He told us to learn everything we can about aviation...before we climb into a cockpit.

SHIRLEY
And we just wanted to look at some aviation maps.

LIBRARIAN
 (nodding)
 Very well.

The librarian opens a drawer.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)
 If you're interested in local
 aviation maps, they're right here.

FRANNY
 Thanks!

SHIRLEY
 Thank you, ma'am!

With a now-beaming librarian watching, Franny and Shirley take out some aviation maps and examine them.

Jeannine turns her attention to Shirley, Franny, and the librarian. The teacher rises out of her seat.

FRANK
 Jeannine...leave 'em alone.

JEANNINE
 Don't you know who's over there?
 Shirley and Frances Evans...those
 two girls who want to fly.

FRANK
 They're not hurting a thing.

Frank watches Jeannine make her way to the threesome...but:

FRANK (CONT'D)
 Honey...sit down.

Jeannine saunters back to her seat...yet keeps an eye on the two girls, who find an empty table.

JEANNINE
 Frank, those two are heading for
 dangerous waters!

When Franny and Shirley take seats and spread out their maps, the librarian leaves the area...with Jeannine on the watch.

FRANK
 Jeannine, honey...look at me.

A reluctant Jeannine turns to Frank.

JEANNINE

Oh, all right.

FRANK

All they're trying to do is expand their minds...and their sense of adventure.

Jeannine grits her teeth while she returns to her section of the local paper.

FRANK (CONT'D)

If we both were alive when Marie Curie was still alive, would you have stood in her way while she was discovering radium?

Frank catches Jeannine's grimace.

Joy grips Shirley and Franny, who study those aviation maps.

EXT. ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Franny and her sister (both loaded with books about aviation) back out of the library.

The twosome go forward once they reach the sidewalk.

SHIRLEY

Franny, we've got enough books to keep us busy until...until...

FRANNY

(shakes her head "yes")
Don't you wish that once you get a library card, you'd never have to renew it for the rest of your life, 'cause it'd expire when you die?

SHIRLEY

Yeah!

INT. EVANSES' LIVING ROOM - DAY

In this cozy, well-furnished space, Roman and Trudy sit on a sofa (he reads the "Journal," she knits)...only to hear the doorbell RING.

She drops her needle and yarn...he drops his newspaper...both parents run to the front door.

He opens it...and Shirley and her sister burst through, books and all.

TRUDY

Good heavens! Did you two buy out
the Albuquerque Public Library?

FRANNY

I wish we could!

SHIRLEY

We'll tell you about it later!

Franny and Shirley go up to their bedroom.

INT. FRANNY'S AND SHIRLEY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Shirley sits at her own desk, Franny reclines on her own
chair, and the twosome pour their attention into a newly-
borrowed Al Avery book each.

FRANNY

Shirl, this book oughta be up
Daddy's alley.

Franny holds out the book's front cover for Shirley to see:
"A Yankee Flier in Normandy."

SHIRLEY

Franny...Normandy's in France.
Remember?

Shirley watches Franny's nod.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

Daddy spent fifteen months in a
stalag in Germany.

FRANNY

Well...at least Germany and France
are both in Europe. And the peace
treaty between the Allies and the
Axis Powers didn't change that.

Franny goes back to her own book while Shirley nods.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

How do you like "A Yankee Flier in
the Far East?"

Shirley shakes her head in the affirmative again before she
puts her own book down to reach for a pen and a piece of
notebook paper.

SHIRLEY
 I keep seeing the word "spalpeen"
 in this book.
 (writes "SPALPEEN" down)
 Remember what Mrs. Earle always
 says?

A still-reading Franny cringes.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
 She says: "If there's a word you're
 not sure about, write the word down
 and find out its definition."

FRANNY
 Good luck.

Shirley returns her attention to her book.

INT. EVANSES' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Franny, Roman, Shirley, and Trudy enjoy pot roast, mashed
 potatoes, and gravy this time around.

ROMAN
 (to Trudy)
 Honey, what can I say? You're still
 the best cook here on Iron Avenue.

TRUDY
 (taking a bite)
 Well...uh...

ROMAN
 You're the best cook in all of
 Albuquerque.

Shirley and Franny eyeball each other in grins.

TRUDY
 What about the cooks at the Liberty
 Cafe?

ROMAN
 They're good...but not as good as
 you.

SHIRLEY
 (takes a sip)
 Mama...Daddy's right.

Franny's grin becomes a huge smile.

TRUDY
Well...in that case...who's ready
for dessert tonight?

FRANNY
Me!

TRUDY
Is your plate clean, Franny?

Trudy looks satisfied once she sees Franny's clean plate.

Roman and Shirley finish what's on their plates.

ROMAN
I'm ready for dessert, hon.

SHIRLEY
Me, too, Mama!

Roman's wife jumps out of her seat and opens the refrigerator door...

TRUDY
(looks at tablemates)
Are you ready for this?

...to pull out a cherry pie.

When she sets the pie on the table, three sets of eyes glow.

TRUDY (CONT'D)
That's not all I've got for dessert
for you tonight.

Trudy closes the fridge, then goes to the cabinet...and when she turns the radio ON, "That's a Good Idea" (or a competing show) blasts out.

Roman cuts a piece of pie each for Shirley, Franny, and himself...and almost drops the knife when he hears the radio.

Franny's so happy she nearly fumbles her fork to the floor.

SHIRLEY
Guess what, Franny? Now we can
listen to "The Hour of Charm"
again.

The two daughters dig in on their pieces of pie...Trudy sits back down to carve out a slice for herself...a bewildered Roman grits his teeth.

Trudy catches Roman's look.

TRUDY

Dear...there's some ice cream in the freezer if you want that on your pie.

ROMAN

I thought the radio was broke.

TRUDY

It was...but the other day, I went downtown and picked up a new tube.

Roman points at the radio, then at Trudy.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

I fixed the radio myself.

The Evans children cheer...their father takes a bite of pie as he eyes their mother.

ROMAN

Can you drive a forklift?

Trudy looks surprised while Franny and Shirley chuckle.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

INT. EVANSES' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Trudy hunkers over the family's 1920s Victrola. The other Evanses watch her lubricate the Victrola's slow-rolling, slow-responding turntable.

INT. SUPERIOR LUMBER COMPANY WAREHOUSE - DAY

Company mechanic Cliff sharpens sawblades...

EXT. SUPERIOR LUMBER COMPANY - DAY

...when Roman lifts some more two-by-fours from a large pile. But the lumber falls to the side of its destination: A truck. Cliff and SOME OTHER EMPLOYEES rush to Roman's aid.

INT. FRANNY'S AND SHIRLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The two little girls line their chairs side by side...to pretend to drive a car. Right now, Franny's the "driver" and Shirley's the "passenger."

INT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Before home room, Shirley reads the family car's owner's manual...and stuffs the manual into her notebook when Jeannine enters the room.

INT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL SCIENCE ROOM - DAY

Prior to class, Franny reads the same manual.

Roy comes in; she sticks the manual into her own notebook...and the teacher smiles in understanding.

EXT. EVANSES' HOUSE - DAY

Franny and Shirley launch paper planes whose wings are shorter than the twosome's earlier efforts.

These new planes work!

INT. FRANNY'S AND SHIRLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shirley "drives" and Franny "rides" in this new incarnation of the "our chairs are a car" setup.

EXT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL - DAY

Alan, Franny, Leonard, Shirley, Sonny, and Vernon fling paper airplanes...and Leonard and Alan look pleased to find the two girls' planes stay in flight as long as the four boys' ones.

Jealousy grips Vernon and Sonny.

INT. EVANSES' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Trudy, Roman, Shirley, and Franny gather around the sofa to read the youngsters' all-Allied-pilots scrapbook.

END MONTAGE

INT. EVANSES' KITCHEN - DAY

Trudy washes the dishes, Franny dries the fronts, Shirley dries the backs, and Roman puts the dishes away.

With the dishes now back in place, the foursome break out in hugs...and Roman and Trudy kiss.

ROMAN

Great job, everybody!

Franny, Shirley, and Trudy AD LIB their jubilation.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

How'd you all like to go for a ride?

TRUDY

Honey, why not?

FRANNY

Yeah!

Roman notices Shirley's megawatt smile.

SHIRLEY

Let's do it, Daddy!

The Evanses stride out of the kitchen...

EXT. EVANSES' HOUSE - DAY

...and pile into their 1935 Ford.

Roman climbs behind the wheel, Trudy rides shotgun, and Shirley and Franny reach the back seat.

Seconds later, the family takes off!

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

The Ford four-door sedan pulls back onto the driveway.

When the four jump out of the car, Roman turns to Shirley.

ROMAN

How'd you like to learn how to drive this car?

SHIRLEY

I'd be honored and delighted.

ROMAN

That's our Shirley Temple Evans!

Shirley goes behind the wheel, Roman slides into the shotgun seat, and Trudy joins Franny at the back seat.

INT. FORD SEDAN - DAY

Shirley rests her hands on the steering wheel.

If needed, a pillow goes atop the driver's seat for height.

ROMAN

Shirley, what's the first thing you should do before you start the car?

SHIRLEY

Actually, Daddy...we need to check to make sure the radiator's got enough water.

Franny and Trudy eye each other in grins.

EXT. EVANSES' HOUSE - FORD SEDAN - DAY

The Ford's hood is up...and Roman guides Shirley as she pours water into the 1935 car's radiator.

He shuts the hood and follows her to the front seats.

Mission accomplished!

INT. FORD SEDAN - DAY

Shirley puts her hands back on the steering wheel.

ROMAN

Now that there's enough water in the radiator, Shirley, what's next?

The young pianist points to a light brown knob.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Pull that out. That's the choke.

Roman watches Shirley pull the choke all the way out.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Good...now...see that little off-on switch below the dashboard?

SHIRLEY

Yes, I do.

ROMAN

That's the ignition switch. Flip that switch to "on."

SHIRLEY

Okay.

Shirley flips the ignition switch to "ON."

ROMAN

There's a little button on the floor. That's your starter button.

SHIRLEY

Got it.

Now Shirley pushes the starter button down.

ROMAN

Make sure you're in neutral.

SHIRLEY

(with an enthusiastic nod)
I'm in neutral.

ROMAN

Now...give it the gas.

Roman's and Trudy's oldest child places her right foot on the accelerator.

The foursome cheer when the car starts up.

All the cheering dies as soon as Shirley and her passengers smell fuel.

SHIRLEY

I think I've flooded the engine.

EXT. IRON AVENUE, SOUTHEAST - DAY

The eleven-year-old Ford sedan lurches down the street...and its eleven-year-old driver waves her left hand out the window in newfound confidence.

EXT. EVANSES' HOUSE - DAY

Shirley slowly-but-surely pulls the Ford into the driveway...

INT. FORD SEDAN - DAY

...and sets off cheers from Trudy, Roman, and Franny.

Shirley breathes relief.

ROMAN

Not bad for a first time behind the wheel.

SHIRLEY

Thanks, Daddy...but I'll make sure I don't flood the engine next time.

Roman nods with a smile.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

Franny now sits behind the wheel and Shirley joins Trudy in the back seat.

Roman (still in the shotgun seat) eyes Franny, who pushes the starter button down.

FRANNY
I'm in neutral. I can feel it.

ROMAN
All right. Give it the gas.

Franny starts the family Ford...and, right foot on the gas pedal, gives the system just enough fuel to prevent flooding.

The sedan erupts in cheers again.

The youngest Evans grabs the gearshift and places her left foot on the clutch pedal...but:

ROMAN (CONT'D)
Don't forget to push the choke back in before you shift.

FRANNY
Okay.

Roman watches Franny push the choke in.

Shirley's sis throws the car into reverse and backs out of the driveway...a bit too fast.

ROMAN
Slow it down just a little bit.

FRANNY
Okay, Daddy.

Trudy's husband nods his approval as Franny slows down.

EXT. IRON AVENUE, SOUTHEAST - DAY

With Franny behind the wheel, the Ford keeps up with the small amount of TRAFFIC.

INT. FORD SEDAN - DAY

Franny and her passengers look delighted.

ROMAN

Franny, you remember your turn signals?

FRANNY

Left arm at a ninety-degree angle means "turn right." Left arm straight out means "turn left."

ROMAN

That's got it!

Roman watches for a safe place for Franny to turn while she keeps her eyes on the road.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Okay, now...turn left up here. And don't forget to downshift.

Franny shakes her head up and down.

EXT. CORNER OF IRON AVENUE AND WALTER STREET, SOUTHEAST - DAY

Now Franny signals her intention to turn left. She downshifts and makes the turn...but...

SMASH! The Ford sedan collides with a 1939 De Soto four-door sedan out to turn right from Walter to Iron.

The accident smashes both cars' front ends.

Roman, Shirley, and Trudy jump out of the Ford to assess the damage to the Evanses' car.

Franny breathes hard while still behind the Ford's wheel.

Sonny hurries out of the De Soto's back seat while dad THEODORE "BUDDY" KREITLING (35) sprints away from the De Soto's driver's seat.

WALLIS JANE "HAPPY" KREITLING (34; Sonny's mom, Buddy's wife) strides from the De Soto's right front side.

Happy and Buddy run to confront Roman.

HAPPY

WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?

BUDDY

(pointing at Roman)

Why don't you watch where you're going?

ROMAN
Calm down--

HAPPY
HELL, NO!

Sonny gazes at Franny, who's still behind the wheel of the Ford. He jogs to his parents.

BUDDY
(up in Roman's face)
Listen, you! You're driving a car,
not flying a damn plane!

ROMAN
Now just wait a minute--

SONNY
Mom, Pop, you'll never guess who
caused the accident.

Trudy and Shirley continue to examine the Ford's front end.

Buddy, Happy, Roman, and Sonny look at Franny.

ROMAN
I was just teaching the children
how to drive...

Roman earns incredulous looks from the Kreitlings.

And a sheepish Franny waves from the driver's seat.

INT. FRANNY'S AND SHIRLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shirley sleeps like a two-by-four...Franny tosses and turns.

The latter jumps out of her bed.

FRANNY
I'M SO SORRY!!

Franny's scream arouses her sister.

Shirley climbs out of her bed and hugs Franny, who's on the verge of tears that refuse to come out.

FRANNY (CONT'D)
I'm so very sorry...

SHIRLEY
It's gonna be all right, Franny.
Everything's gonna be all right.

Franny's is a slow nod.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
You can talk to me...I'm your
sister.

The two siblings saunter, arm in arm, to Shirley's bed.

When they sit down on the bed, Franny buries her head in her
own hands.

The preteens find a KNOCK on the door.

FRANNY
COME IN...come in!

Roman opens the door to the children's bedroom; Trudy follows
him in.

The parents take seats on Franny's bed.

FRANNY (CONT'D)
(looking up at Roman)
I almost got us all
killed...because I stepped on the
clutch too late!

Franny buries her head in her hands again...this time, Roman
bends down to hug her.

FRANNY (CONT'D)
Daddy...Mama...I'm so sorry...

ROMAN
It's all right...it's just a car.

Shirley and Trudy shake their heads "yes."

ROMAN (CONT'D)
The main thing is...nobody got
killed.

Franny looks up at Roman.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
We're still very much alive.

FRANNY
Daddy...how're you gonna get to
work?

ROMAN

Don't worry about a thing. It'll
all work out.

Trudy bends down to talk to Franny.

TRUDY

Franny...I know how much you and
Shirley want to become pilots.

Franny shakes her head up and down.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

Accidents happen...that's just how
it is when you're human.

Trudy and Franny hold hands.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

Please...please don't let that
accident stop you from going after
your goal.

Shirley jumps in to hold her mom's and sister's hands.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

Franny...Shirley...don't ever
forget that you both can be
anything you want. Period.

SHIRLEY

Mama, we'll never forget that.

FRANNY

And that's the truth.

The four Evanses stand up and hug each other.

ROMAN

One of these days, I'll tell you
about the day I first learned how
to drive.

FRANNY

Daddy, how old were you when you
started to drive?

ROMAN

Uh...nine.

Franny's and Shirley's mouths fly open.

INT. EVANSES' KITCHEN - DAY

Franny, Roman, Shirley, and Trudy finish eating lunch.

When Franny forks the last of her piece of cake into her mouth, she sets the fork down, pushes the plate away, and buries her head in her hands.

Trudy and Roman grab their dirty dishes and place them into the sink as Shirley drapes her arm around Franny.

FRANNY

I was feeling all right...until the
pastor opened up his sermon this
morning by talking about guilt.

Both parents overhear Franny. Trudy turns the faucet on and nods at Roman.

SHIRLEY

Franny...

Franny turns to her sister.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

I think I know what'll really cheer
you up...

INT. EVANSES' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Shirley sits at the family's 1900-19 upright piano...Franny sits at a vintage drum set.

SHIRLEY

Just gimme a beat...any kind of
beat you want.

Franny looks dumbfounded.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

Any beat your heart desires. I'll
play along to it.

FRANNY

Uh...okay, Shirley.

Shirley watches Franny put over a medium beat; the former nods to the beat.

SHIRLEY

Keep the beat going...you're doing
fine.

Franny's medium drumbeat grows stronger while a still-nodding Shirley searches through a stack of sheet music atop the old-fashioned piano.

Shirley finds what she wants: "String of Pearls," by Glenn Miller and His Orchestra.

When Shirley adds her piano playing to Franny's drumming, Roman and Trudy enter the living room.

The parents recline on the sofa.

Trudy's feet tap to the two little girls' music...Roman nods his head to the beat...a smile reaches Shirley's face.

ROMAN
(to Trudy)
Looks like the old Franny's back.

Trudy nods her agreement with Roman.

Shirley eyeballs Franny, who flashes a smile at last.

SHIRLEY
Franny...how would you like to help
me start a band?

As the two preteens continue to jam, Franny's smile grows.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
I don't think Mrs. Earle would get
mad at us for that!

FRANNY
As long as it makes Sonny Kreitling
throw up, let's start a band!

Shirley plays a glissando...then she gestures Franny into a drum solo.

INT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Kathryn conducts THE SCHOOL ORCHESTRA (pianist Shirley, drummer Franny, trombonist Rachel, bass-fiddle-playing Virginia, and eleven other students) in a classical piece.

Virginia, Shirley, Rachel, and Franny outplay their fellow musicians...and Kathryn's look tells the story.

When the tune ends:

KATHRYN

Let's see...maybe next time, we should try to play this piece as a swing number.

While Rachel's and Shirley's eyes light up, two or three other orchestra members AD LIB their agreement with Kathryn.

FRANNY

It couldn't hurt. And besides, Phil Spitalny and His "Hour of Charm" Orchestra do this all the time.

A few of Franny's orchestra mates cringe.

KATHRYN

Anyway...everybody, be ready next time to turn this piece into a real swinger.

RACHEL

Don't worry, Miss Psaltis. We will.

KATHRYN

That's the spirit, Rachel.

The bell RINGS...students pack up (or walk away from) their instruments and stroll toward the door.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

(waving at students)

See you next time!

Just short of the door, Shirley gestures Rachel into a halt while the remaining musicians leave the room.

SHIRLEY

Rachel, you got a minute?

RACHEL

You bet I do, Shirley.

SHIRLEY

You're the best trombone player in this whole school.

RACHEL

Well, thanks.

The two buddies walk out the door...

INT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

...and continue their conversation as OTHER STUDENTS fill up the hallway.

RACHEL
Now...if this school had a second
trombone player besides me...

SHIRLEY
Here's what I wanted to tell you.

Rachel perks up while she and Shirley continue to stroll.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
My sister and I are forming a
band...kinda like the Benny Goodman
Quartet, except we're looking for a
trombone player instead of a
clarinet player.

RACHEL
Well, I'll be a...

SHIRLEY
And we'd sure love to have you.

RACHEL
Count me in!

SHIRLEY
Skin me, Rachel Elizabeth Peters!

RACHEL
Skin me, Shirley Temple Evans!

Shirley and Rachel do their 1940s-style handshake.

SAME SCENE - SEVERAL HOURS LATER

Franny spots Virginia on the other side of the hallway when MORE STUDENTS head for their next classes.

FRANNY
Virginia, you got a few minutes?

VIRGINIA
Uh...sure.

The young drummer strides to Virginia's side of the aisle.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
Franny, what can I do for you?

FRANNY

My sister and I wanna start our own band...kinda like Benny Goodman's quartet.

Virginia's mouth flies open.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

Except they don't have a bass player...and we wanna have one. And you're the best in the whole school.

The young bassist points to herself, then to Franny.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

We'd really love to have you.

Both little musicians stroll down the hall.

VIRGINIA

Aw...what the heck. Why not?

FRANNY

You'll be glad you did!

Virginia and Franny shake hands.

EXT. EVANSES' HOUSE - DAY

On this February Sunday, a bundled-up Virginia wrestles her bass fiddle (still in its case) out of the Brechlers' 1936 Chevy two-door sedan.

She waves goodbye, then lugs her bass toward the Evans house.

INT. EVANSES' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Franny runs through some drum fills, Rachel blows scales on her trombone, and Shirley plays piano arpeggios...when the doorbell RINGS.

The threesome abandon their instruments.

Roman and Trudy jump from the sofa; he opens the door.

On the other side of the door, Virginia hides behind her standup bass.

ROMAN

You must be Virginia.

Virginia shakes her head "yes" while she spots Rachel, Shirley, and Franny.

TRUDY

C'mon in. It's all right.

But Virginia stays on the outside...and her three musical Eugene Field School buddies run to the door.

Shirley offers her hand to Virginia.

SHIRLEY

I don't remember Gene Krupa holding out on Benny Goodman when Gene found out Teddy Wilson and Lionel Hampton were gonna be in the quartet.

A shrugging Virginia enters the Evanses' place; Shirley, Franny, and Rachel follow her while Roman closes the door and joins Trudy back on the sofa.

VIRGINIA

(opens bass case)

Sorry about that...I just got cold feet. It's not about race or anything like that.

Shirley nods in understanding.

Virginia pulls out her bull fiddle, Rachel grabs her trombone, and Franny returns to her drums.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

You three are such excellent musicians.

SHIRLEY

(sits back down at piano)

Why, thank you.

FRANNY

Takes one to know one, Virginia.

SHIRLEY

And we do try our best.

A smiling Virginia turns to Rachel.

RACHEL
Virginia, you don't have to worry.
As long as all four of us work
together and help each other out,
nobody in the world can beat us.
Right?

VIRGINIA
Right!

Franny and Shirley AD LIB their agreement with Rachel.

RACHEL
Shirley...how are you and Franny on
"String of Pearls?"

SHIRLEY
I was gonna ask you that!

The living room erupts in laughter.

FRANNY
(to Virginia)
You comfortable with "String of
Pearls?"

VIRGINIA
Yeah.

Shirley gives a downbeat, then joins Virginia and Franny in
an eight-bar intro that leads to Rachel's solo trombone work.

Trudy and Roman pat their feet and/or nod to the beat.

ROMAN
Hon...if flying doesn't work out
for our daughters, I know music
will.

TRUDY
(pointing to Roman)
I'm betting on both things working
out for our daughters.

ROMAN
(with a slight grin)
Good point.

Franny, Rachel, Shirley, and Virginia continue to show off
their musical chemistry.

INT. EVANSES' GARAGE - DAY

On this cold Saturday, Trudy and Roman (both in overalls and jackets) add a new radiator to the family's 1935 Ford.

The overhead door's closed...new front panels, a new hood, new headlights, and a new grille await installation.

TRUDY

Roman, honey...I hope you don't mind my being out here to help fix the car.

Roman stares in space awhile, then flashes a smile at Trudy.

ROMAN

Are you kidding? With both of us working together, things go twice as fast.

Trudy shows Roman her own smile.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

If you hold that radiator down, I'll screw it in place.

TRUDY

You bet.

Roman bolts the radiator in place while Trudy secures it...when they HEAR multiple knocks on the garage door.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

I've got the door.

ROMAN

Okay, Trude.

While Roman checks the radiator to make sure it's secure, Trudy raises the garage door...and finds Shirley and Franny (both in jackets and overalls) outside the door.

TRUDY

Franny? Shirley?

SHIRLEY

We'd like to come in and help, if it's all right.

FRANNY

And besides, Mama, I'm responsible for you and Daddy being in the garage in the first place.

Trudy looks touched.

TRUDY
Sure...c'mon in.

Franny and Shirley jog into the garage. Trudy lowers its overhead door.

Roman looks up from the Ford and sees his and Trudy's progeny run toward the car.

ROMAN
I heard you two tell your mama that you wanna help.

Trudy returns to the car.

FRANNY
Well, Daddy...me and Shirley are just trying to show responsibility.

Shirley shakes her head "yes."

ROMAN
Hey, that's got it.

Shirley and Franny run toward a new front panel.

SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. EVANSES' GARAGE - DAY

Big Sis and Little Sis lug the new left front panel toward the family Ford.

The daughters hold the panel in place while the parents bolt it down.

The Evanses do the same thing to get the car's new right front panel secured.

If necessary, the family reinstalls the Ford's wheel covers.

Under Trudy's watch, Franny holds the grille in place and Shirley fastens it in place.

With the greatest of care, the foursome lift the hood off the garage floor and fasten it to the car.

Roman tests the hood to make sure it can be raised and lowered.

He's satisfied.

Roman watches Shirley hold the 1935 Ford's front bumper in place as Franny screws the bumper into place.

Franny installs the new left headlight...Shirley puts in the new right headlight.

Shirley fills the battery with water while Franny puts water into the radiator.

From the driver's seat, Trudy tests the headlights. When they come on, Roman offers a "thumbs up."

Franny dons a mask and spraypaints the left front panel the same color as the rest of the car...Shirley follows suit for the right front panel.

Roman applies paint to the hood.

At last, Trudy starts the car...and sets off cheers from Franny, Roman, and Shirley.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. EVANSES' HOUSE - DAY

It's mid-afternoon...not as nippy as earlier.

Roman and Trudy sit on the front steps.

ROMAN

You know...we make quite a team. Me and you.

TRUDY

Well...actually, you and me and Shirley and Franny.

ROMAN

Good point.

Husband and wife kiss.

Trudy reaches into her overalls and pulls out a big cigar.

Roman looks flummoxed as she lights up that stogie.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Trudy...your favorite brand of cigarettes is back in the stores.

Roman pulls a pack of cigarettes out of his overalls and offers the pack to Trudy...but she shakes her head "no" and takes a puff from her cigar.

He stuffs the pack back into his overalls.

TRUDY

Ever since I saw "Duck Soup," I've wanted to have something in common with Groucho Marx...even if I can't grow a mustache.

Trudy tries to wiggle her eyebrows.

EXT. SUPERIOR LUMBER COMPANY - DAY

On this slightly-rainy Monday, Roman pulls that fixed-up Ford into the company parking lot.

He jumps out of the car and does a happy dance.

INT. SUPERIOR LUMBER COMPANY WAREHOUSE - DAY

Cliff, Roman, and THE REST OF THE STAFF sit around a conference table, where they hear from company president PETER FAMIGLIETTI (50s).

PETER

Men, we've decided to offer you a brand-new service.

Some employees nod.

PETER (CONT'D)

Some of you employees have asked us to provide this service...and a few of you look like you need it.

Roman receives stares from some coworkers.

PETER (CONT'D)

I'd like you to meet
(gestures to his left)
Dale Swearingen.

DALE SWEARINGEN (a man of 40) nods at the employees.

DALE

Thank you, Peter...men, I'm here to help you...I'm a counselor.

Some employee mouths hang open.

DALE (CONT'D)

I realize, and Peter does, too,
that many of you have had so much
trouble readjusting to civilian
life these last five months...the
five months since the war ended.

Cliff eyeballs Roman.

ROMAN

Cliff...I'm not the only one.

INT. SUPERIOR LUMBER COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

Dale sits at his desk in this moderately-furnished office.
Across from him, Roman occupies a not-so-comfy chair.

ROMAN

It's gonna be tough...but I'm gonna
try.

DALE

It's okay, Roman. Take your time.

Dale yanks a pack of cigarettes from his shirt pocket.

DALE (CONT'D)

Cigarette?

ROMAN

No thanks.

Superior Lumber's counselor puts the pack back in his pocket.

DALE

Just checking.

Roman stares into space a few seconds...then:

ROMAN

My dad was in the Army in World War
1...big, big hero. Back home in San
Luis Obispo, California, they gave
him the key to the city.

Dale nods.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

He was one of the seventeen
soldiers who silenced that German
machine gun nest...the act that got
Alvin York that Medal of Honor.

Dale scribbles notes onto a piece of paper.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

So when I joined the Army Air Corps the day after Pearl Harbor, I felt the weight of having to live up to a reputation...a family reputation.

DALE

So...you felt that kind of pressure.

ROMAN

Well...my father's name was Julius Caesar Evans.

DALE

I can only imagine the kind of pressure he had to live up to, too.

ROMAN

Dad was the undisputed king of his house. No questions asked.

The counselor looks up from his notes.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

With a name like that, he had no other choice...and my two brothers rule their households the same way. And then I come along as a father and husband.

DALE

What's it been like at home in the five months since you came back from flying over Europe?

ROMAN

Before Pearl Harbor, I did all the "man things" in the house...but now, my wife Trudy repairs radios on the side. And cars.

(grinning)

She did a good job...on both.

Dale writes some more notes.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

And now...our two daughters want to learn how to fly.

DALE

A plane?

ROMAN

Absolutely. That's what Shirley and Franny wanna do.

DALE

A plane.

ROMAN

I know...it'd feel more natural if Trudy and I had a couple of sons. But we've got a couple of daughters. And they want wings.

Dale looks up at Roman.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Is my manhood slipping away?

DALE

Speaking of wings, Roman...you sure you don't want a cigarette?

Roman shakes his head "no."

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

This small airport on the west side of town features a hangar whose front facade reads: "CUTTER-CARR FLYING SERVICE."

Roman, Trudy, Franny, and Shirley watch Eddie and ANOTHER WORKER tend to a 1946 Stinson 108.

Shirley turns to her parents.

SHIRLEY

You should see this airport from up above. The way they've laid out the runways, it looks like a pinwheel.

FRANNY

At least that's how it looks on an aviation map.

ROMAN

Hmmm...never thought about that.

Eddie leaves the small plane and walks over to the Evanses.

EDDIE

Well, if it ain't the two little dolls.

FRANNY

And we've got a lotta grit...or else we wouldn't be here.

Shirley and Trudy nod.

EDDIE

Your mommy and daddy say you two wanna learn how to fly one of these babies.

TRUDY

Absolutely right, Eddie!

SHIRLEY

(to Eddie)

Daddy said you come highly recommended...that you're the best flight instructor in Albuquerque.

Franny and Shirley shake hands with Eddie.

EDDIE

Well...I ain't gonna tell you nothing wrong.

ROMAN

That's the Eddie Pitlock I know.

The five of them laugh.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

Eddie, Franny, and Shirley board the Stinson. As the two youngsters climb into the back seats, Trudy pulls a small movie camera from her purse.

Roman watches her.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

How did you get that ol' camera inside that...that purse of yours?

TRUDY

(aims camera at plane)

It wasn't easy.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Before he takes off, Eddie points to the instrument panel while he eyeballs Shirley and Franny.

EDDIE

Now...this is your instrument panel. You read this when you can't take a look out the window.

SHIRLEY

Right! The instrument on the top is the compass. On the middle left is the airspeed indicator.

FRANNY

The instrument in the very middle is the altimeter.

SHIRLEY

And the one on the middle right is the tachometer.

Eddie looks mortified.

FRANNY

Shirley and I took our daddy's advice and read everything we could get our hands on about airplanes.

EDDIE

Uh...you're...both right.

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

The Stinson takes off at last...and Trudy catches the ascension on her movie camera.

A nodding Roman smiles.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Shirley and Franny watch Eddie control the plane.

EDDIE

Now...I want you two cuties to tell me why you wanna fly a plane.

FRANNY

Well, Mr. Pitlock, it's a way to honor our daddy.

EDDIE

I thought you two being good little girls was the way to honor your daddy.

SHIRLEY

We try to be good...and we also wanna follow in his footsteps. And his flying made him famous.

FRANNY

And we wanna follow in the footsteps of Amelia Earhart and Bessie Coleman.

EDDIE

They died, didn't they?

SHIRLEY

Yes, they did...but so did Will Rogers and Wiley Post.

Dead silence...for a few seconds.

EDDIE

Okay. You're right.

Eddie increases the aircraft's altitude.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Take a look down there, you two.

The two little musicians gaze out the window.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Whaddya see?

SHIRLEY

I see they're building some houses.

EDDIE

Right! You're looking at a growing Albuquerque!

Shirley and Franny nod.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

You two sure you ain't scared of heights?

FRANNY

Are you kidding? Shirl and I love adventure!

EDDIE

Well, then...get ready for this!

Eddie takes the 108 through a stunt.

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

Shirley, Franny, and Eddie climb out of the plane; Roman and Trudy (she continues to shoot footage) run toward them.

SHIRLEY

Mr. Pitlock, have you ever heard the word "spalpeen" before?

EDDIE

Yeah. That's Irish for "rascal."

The two men and the two little girls shake hands while Trudy's camera catches it all.

ROMAN

(to Eddie)

Shirley found the word in one of those Al Avery books she and Franny checked out at the library.

EDDIE

I thought them books were for boys.

TRUDY

They're for any kids who love adventure...boys or girls.

EDDIE

That tears it. They've got it.

(to Franny and Shirley)

I'd like to be you two's flight instructor.

FRANNY, SHIRLEY

Yes!

Jubilation breaks out between the two ex-Army Air Corps pilots and the two youngsters.

Trudy shuts the camera off to join in the cheering...just as Buddy approaches the hangar.

He cringes at the celebration.

EXT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL - DAY

SOME CHILDREN, books in hands, run toward the school on this April Fools' Day.

INT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL MUSIC ROOM - DAY

With time to spare before the opening bell, Franny (on drums), Rachel (on trombone), Shirley (on piano), and Virginia (on bass fiddle) jazz up "On the Good Ship Lollipop" or a similar 1930s movie song.

The hammers stand exposed again on the old upright...and a gleeful Kathryn (in a student's seat) taps her feet to the lively music.

INT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Roy and Jeannine stroll the hallway and HEAR the music.

JEANNINE

Roy, you're very high on this
Leonard Carter boy, aren't you?

ROY

Wail, why not? Good is
good...genius is genius. Period.

JEANNINE

But he's--

ROY

Jeannine, Leonard's found somethin'
that gits him all excited.

JEANNINE

I wish grammar got him excited.

ROY

Listen, he could be the next George
Washin'ton Carver or the next
Charles Drew. Why snuff that out?

JEANNINE

You're taking a very long shot.
After all, he's--

ROY

You sound like all those teachers
Ah left behind when Ah left
Shreveport.

Jeannine and Roy approach the music room.

ROY (CONT'D)
 Now, Ah left there 'cause Ah got so
 sick and tired of playin' the
 racism game.

He opens the door and gestures her inside.

ROY (CONT'D)
 Speakin' of good is good...

INT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Jeannine walks in, Roy closes the door and follows her, and Kathryn gestures the twosome toward seats next to hers.

Roy's eyes light up as he barely sits down.

KATHRYN
 (to Jeannine)
 What do you think of the
 Albuquerque Four?

Kathryn points toward Roy while she eyeballs Jeannine...who notices the piano minus its music rack.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
 Roy's already taken a shine to--

JEANNINE
 Kathryn...may I remind you that
 this is an elementary school, not
 a...a...a...house of ill repute?

The four little girls' music heats up.

KATHRYN
 Come on...have a seat.

Jeannine sits down at last.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
 The girls and I took the music rack
 off the piano to let the sound out.

A FEW STUDENTS enter the classroom. They look stunned as they take seats.

Now the Albuquerque Four end their tune...and bring Kathryn and Roy (along with a student or two) to applaud.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)
 Great job up there, you four!

Virginia, Shirley, Rachel, and Franny AD LIB their gratitude.

ROY
Y'all sound just like
Nyalins...give or take a few miles.

RACHEL
Well, thanks, Mr. Plasman!

Jeannine stares at the old piano, then at the band.

JEANNINE
So...you four girls call yourselves
the Albuquerque Four.

SHIRLEY
It was Virginia's idea.

Virginia looks sheepish.

FRANNY
Well...we didn't like the idea of
being called the Jazz Dolls or the
Jazzettes.

VIRGINIA
Or anything else like that.

JEANNINE
(walks toward the band)
Frances...Shirley...perhaps this
will take your minds off becoming
pilots.

Shirley and a grinning Franny shake their heads sideways.

EXT. EVANSES' HOUSE - DAY

Trudy works under the hood of a 1940 Studebaker when a 1946 Olds 98 pulls to a stop along the street right in front of the house.

When the Oldsmobile's horn HONKS, Trudy closes the Stude's hood and runs toward the Olds.

Trudy looks stunned when she sees DELILAH MAE HODGKINS (69; Trudy's spirited mom) emerge from the 98's driver's seat.

When Delilah Mae and Trudy hug, the latter's puzzlement turns into delight.

TRUDY

Mama! Welcome back to Albuquerque!
In style!

DELILAH MAE

Well, thank you, Trudy!

Mother and Daughter break the hug...and Delilah Mae notices the cigars in Trudy's shirt pocket.

DELILAH MAE (CONT'D)

Are you sure you're Gertrude Marie
Hodgkins Evans?

TRUDY

I sure am.
(points to cigars)
Ever since I went to see
"Saratoga," I've wanted to have
something in common with Jean
Harlow.

DELILAH MAE

Don't tell me you wanna come down
with leukemia!

Trudy shakes her head sideways.

TRUDY

Let me see your new car.

Delilah Mae and Trudy walk toward the 1946 car. The former opens the car's driver's-side door.

DELILAH MAE

Get a load of this...

TRUDY

(peeking inside Olds)
I'll be doggone...you went and got
a Hydramatic.

DELILAH MAE

I've been waiting seven years for
this...ever since General Motors
introduced Hydramatics.

Trudy closes the new car's driver's-side door. She and Delilah Mae walk toward the car's trunk.

DELILAH MAE (CONT'D)

And let me tell you, Trudy: The
ride is oh-so-smooth!

DELILAH MAE (CONT'D)

(opens trunk)
I had a ball driving all one
thousand eleven miles from Houston
to here.

Delilah Mae yanks a large suitcase out of the Olds' trunk.

TRUDY

Here, Mama. Let me take that.

Trudy grabs her mom's suitcase.

DELILAH MAE

(closes trunk)
Okay.

Trudy lugs Delilah Mae's suitcase along...and the two women
head toward the Evanses' place.

DELILAH MAE (CONT'D)

I've packed enough for a weekend
here in Albuquerque.

TRUDY

I'm glad you took the words out of
my mouth.

INT. EVANSES' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Delilah Mae, Franny, Roman, Shirley, and Trudy sit around the
table, where they eat catfish and all the trimmings.

DELILAH MAE

We're having fish here on the
Friday before Easter...and we're
not even Catholic.

Shirley takes a bite, then eyeballs Delilah Mae.

SHIRLEY

Well, Grandma, it's a special
occasion.

FRANNY

(to Delilah Mae)
It's a special occasion 'cause
you're here.

DELILAH MAE

Why...thank you!

The five eaters raise their glasses.

INT. EVANSES' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Trudy, Roman, and Delilah Mae sit on the sofa; Shirley and Franny recline on the piano bench.

Delilah Mae points to the drum set.

DELILAH MAE
Roman...you're taking up the drums.

ROMAN
No, Mrs. Hodgkins. That's not me.

Trudy nods at Delilah Mae.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
I'm just happy singing.

DELILAH MAE
Trudy?

TRUDY
(shakes her head "no")
I can barely play the piano.

Franny and Shirley shrug.

FRANNY
Grandma...I'm the drummer in the family.

DELILAH MAE
Well, uh...Franny, let's hear what you've got.

FRANNY
Okay!

And Franny jumps off the piano bench.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

Drummer Franny and pianist Shirley take a rollicking "Opus One" (or a similar swinger) down the home stretch.

At the end, Roman, Delilah Mae, and Trudy applaud.

DELILAH MAE
Very good, you two!

SHIRLEY
Thanks, Grandma!

Trudy and Roman nod in agreement.

DELILAH MAE

You both sound very good...but
don't you know any classical music?

FRANNY

We do...but every time Shirley and
I play classical music, people fall
asleep.

The three adults in the room eyeball each other.

DELILAH MAE

C'mon, Shirl and Fran! Try us! We
won't fall asleep!

The two little girls eye each other, then Delilah Mae.

SHIRLEY

Okay...we will.

SAME SCENE - STILL LATER

Shirley and Franny play a Mozart piece...only to find Trudy,
Roman, and Delilah Mae sound asleep.

In fact, Delilah Mae snores!

Big Sis and Little Sis stop playing to eyeball one another.

FRANNY

I wonder how this would sound if we
gave it the old Kathryn Psaltis
treatment.

SHIRLEY

(slowly grinning)
Franny...let's do it!

Franny and Shirley relaunch their Mozart piece...and this
time, it boasts the big-band sound.

One by one, Roman, Trudy, and Delilah Mae wake up.

Delilah Mae looks confused.

TRUDY

Mama...that's how your two
granddaughters really sound.

Delilah Mae watches Roman nod to the beat.

INT. FRANNY'S AND SHIRLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shirley, Franny, and Delilah Mae stride into the room...and Delilah Mae looks shocked to see a model Popsicle-stick airplane on each youngster's desk.

Some paper airplanes rest on Franny's and Shirley's beds.

DELILAH MAE
Your folks tell me you both wanna
be pilots.

FRANNY
Yep.

SHIRLEY
Just like Bessie Coleman and Amelia
Earhart.

Delilah Mae sits on Franny's bed.

DELILAH MAE
(picks up paper plane)
Yeah, but...they died.

SHIRLEY
Grandma, would it help if I
mentioned that Franny and I also
wanna follow in our daddy's
footsteps by becoming pilots?

FRANNY
And Daddy's still alive.

DELILAH MAE
Don't tell me you two wanna spend
fifteen months in a German stalag!

FRANNY
Nope.

Now Delilah Mae sets the paper plane back on Franny's bed and walks to the box of broken dolls.

Trudy's mom fills each hand of hers with a busted doll. She shows the two casualties to Franny and Shirley.

DELILAH MAE
Shirley...Franny...come here.

The two youngsters meet Delilah Mae at the box of dolls.

DELILAH MAE (CONT'D)

What happened to all the dolls I gave you...Grandma Evans gave you...your mommy and daddy gave you?

Shirley and Franny grin at each other, then turn their eyes to Delilah Mae.

FRANNY

Our dolls love to get in fights.

SHIRLEY

Lots of fights.

Delilah Mae's puzzlement increases.

FRANNY

Lots and lots of fights.

SHIRLEY

Lots and lots and lots of fights.

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

Eddie, Franny, and Shirley stand outside the Stinson 108.

EDDIE

Now...before we get in the plane, I want you two little cuties to know something.

SHIRLEY

Uh...okay, Mr. Pitlock.

Franny nods.

EDDIE

When you're in the cockpit, you're gonna be talking with the control tower. And you're gonna need a nickname. You can't talk with 'em as Franny or Shirley.

FRANNY

Okay, Mr. Pitlock, what's your nickname?

EDDIE

My nickname?
(with a grin)
"Fierce Warrior."

FRANNY

Shirley, that makes sense...what with a hundred and fourteen combat missions.

Shirley nods at Eddie.

EDDIE

Okay, Shirley, what's yours?

SHIRLEY

Well, uh, since Mama left a Shirley Temple movie to go to the hospital to have me, I think I'll call myself "Bright Eyes."

Franny receives expecting looks from Shirley and Eddie.

FRANNY

Just call me..."Little Drummer."

Shirley's and Franny's faces show pride...Eddie's face shows plenty of confusion.

EDDIE

Girls don't play drums.

SHIRLEY

Mr. Pitlock, my sister actually does play drums...and she's quite good. Been playing for three years.

FRANNY

Thank you, Shirley.

SHIRLEY

You're so very welcome.

FRANNY

(to Eddie)

I remember when both Phil Spitalny's All-Girl Orchestra and the International Sweethearts of Rhythm came to town.

Eddie cringes.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

Pauline Braddy of the International Sweethearts of Rhythm put on quite a show on those drums of hers.

EDDIE

Let's go walk around the plane.

The instructor and his two students stroll around the plane.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

We gotta make sure it's in top running order before we get in.

FRANNY

Anyway, both Pauline Braddy and Viola Smith are my two favorite drummers.

SHIRLEY

And, Mr. Pitlock, they're the two drummers Franny's trying to copy.

EDDIE

(pointing to Franny)

You need to get another nickname. Something ladylike.

Franny shakes her head sideways.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

And don't ever mention Pauline Braddy or Viola Smith again! Or Bessie Coleman! Or Amelia Earhart!

Shirley and Franny shake their noggins "no."

EXT. PETERSES' HOUSE - DAY

This is a modest Casita not too far from the Evanses' house.

INT. PETERSES' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Virginia (on bass fiddle), Shirley (on a beat-up 1900-09 upright piano), Rachel (on trombone), and Franny (on drums) rehearse uptempo jazz in a cozy-to-almost-cramped space.

Good thing it opens up into the dining room.

Elijah, Harriet, Roman, and Trudy watch in pride from a sofa and some chairs.

AMANDA BRECHLER (39, nonchalant; Virginia's mom) sways to the beat of the Albuquerque Four.

The four little girls bring their tune to an end...and bring out their parents' hearty applause.

Amanda turns to Harriet and Elijah.

AMANDA
Now that's gate!

Elijah's mouth flies open.

HARRIET
Amanda, you took the words outa my
mouth!

ELIJAH
(pointing to Amanda)
And I'm glad you did!

Franny, Shirley, Rachel, and Virginia walk away from (or put down) their instruments to bow in front of their folks.

ROMAN
You four sound great...you'll do
great at the Field School PTA
meeting a week from this Monday.

RACHEL
Thanks, Mr. Evans!

TRUDY
The way you four sound, I know
you'll burn up that school gym.

SHIRLEY
(to her bandmates)
Did you hear that?

The Albuquerque Four whoop it up.

HARRIET
(stands up)
Hey, everybody...before anybody
burns anything up, let's go in the
dining room and eat.

VIRGINIA
Good idea, Mrs. Peters!

INT. PETERSES' DINING ROOM - DAY

Rachel, Harriet, Elijah, and their six guests sit, gab, and eat around a table enlarged by a leaf.

FRANNY

Anyway, when Mrs. Earle told me and Shirley that the Albuquerque Four were invited to play at the PTA meeting, guess what she said to us?

AMANDA

I'd hate to guess.

SHIRLEY

Mrs. Earle said: "Frances, you're a girl who plays drums. Do you realize what kind of message your decision to play the drums sends?"

FRANNY

Then she said to me:
 (tries to mimic Jeannine)
 "What do you plan to do about the fact that your legs are far apart while you're playing those drums?"

Rachel takes a sip, then turns to the adults at the table.

RACHEL

Don't worry. All four of us got it all figured out.

Elijah and Rachel click their glasses.

EXT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL - NIGHT

SOME PEOPLE in light jackets enter the building.

INT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

From midcourt to the free-throw line, several rows of folding chairs seat PEOPLE OF ROUGHLY ALL AGES...parents, students, and teachers.

The Brechlers, Evanses, and Peterses sit together toward the back...with Franny, Rachel (trombone by her side), Shirley, and Virginia in tuxedos.

Buddy and Happy sit in the front row...as do PTA chief MARY ELLEN MARGENTHALER (44, straightforward) and her husband LESTER (45, a bit open-minded; walks with a cane).

Everybody enjoys the skit Sally Jo and Sonny put on in front.

SALLY JO

Sonny...now that you've killed the Bluebird of Happiness, and cooked it, what have you got to say for yourself?

Sonny pretends to chow down on the bird.

SONNY

Mmm...tastes like chicken.

He takes another imaginary bite...and flashes a toothy smile.

The gym erupts in laughter.

Sonny and Sally Jo link arms. When the two sixth-graders bow and bow and bow, they set off hearty applause.

Happy and Buddy look ecstatic. So do the couple in back of them: HORACE and ELOISE GOODSON (both 40s; Sally Jo's folks).

HORACE

Eloise, that would've been even better with a real piece of meat.

Eloise waves Horace off, then turns to Sonny's folks.

ELOISE

Buddy...Happy...I know you're really proud of your son.

Mary Ellen struts to the front and grabs a mike on its stand.

BUDDY

Sonny always makes us proud.

HAPPY

Always!

MARY ELLEN

(into mike)

Everybody, let's hear it for Herbert Kreitling and Sally Jo Goodson!

The audience applause kicks back in...and Sonny cringes as he and Sally Jo leave to sit with their parents.

MARY ELLEN (CONT'D)

And now, to cap off the
entertainment portion of tonight's
May 1946 Eugene Field Elementary
School PTA meeting...we present the
sound of modern jazz.

Shirley, Rachel, Franny, and Virginia look fired up...and
their parents even more so.

Roy's, Kathryn's, and Frank's excitement level is through the
roof...Jeannine fidgets.

MARY ELLEN (CONT'D)

And four of our fine Field School
students will give it to you.

ELIJAH

Get ready, Rachel!

Rachel gives Elijah a "thumbs up."

MARY ELLEN

Ladies and gentlemen...meet the
Albuquerque Four!

Under good applause (stronger among the bandmembers'
parents), Virginia, Rachel (with her trombone), Franny, and
Shirley stroll to the front of the gym.

Franny heads for a drum set, Virginia stands a bass fiddle
up, and Shirley goes to a 1910-19 upright piano.

When the cheers end, the Kreitlings and a few other families
boo the band.

Mary Ellen gestures the Albuquerque Four away from their
instruments while the booing continues.

MARY ELLEN (CONT'D)

You girls can't go up.

Four incredulous musicians surround Mary Ellen.

FRANNY

Wait a cotton-pickin' minute! Why
can't we go up?

MARY ELLEN

Don't you hear them booing?

RACHEL

Yeah, but once we start playing,
they're sure to stop booing.

MARY ELLEN

You can't go up there tonight.

Trudy, Roman, Harriet, Elijah, and Amanda storm to the front.

TRUDY

(points to Mary Ellen)
Why isn't anybody playing?

ELIJAH

I didn't fight in both world wars
to have Rachel put up with this
garbage!

SHIRLEY

Mrs. Margenthaler, we've worked
hard these last three months to get
to the point where we could play in
public.

ROMAN

Come on, Mrs. Margenthaler. Let our
daughters and their friends play.

Eloise, Frank, Horace, Roy, Kathryn, and many others look
stunned...and Lester buries his head in his hands.

Buddy, Happy, Sonny, and some others continue to boo.

MARY ELLEN

NO!

VIRGINIA

It's not fair!

MARY ELLEN

Virginia...some of the parents have
a problem with a mixed-race band.

Elijah and Harriet seethe while Rachel shakes her head "no."
Harriet wags a finger at Mary Ellen.

HARRIET

No. It's YOU who's got the problem!

Kathryn jumps from her seat to join the conference-of-sorts.

AMANDA

(to Mary Ellen)

Let me tell you something: My
husband...Virginia's
father...didn't die in the Bataan
Death March so that you could cheat
Virginia because her friends come
in all colors!

Mary Ellen's mouth flies open.

The barbs fly (now AD LIBS) when Kathryn strolls to the mike.

KATHRYN

(into mike)

Everybody...calm down. I've got a
solution.

A hush falls over the gym.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

Those of you who have a problem
with the Albuquerque Four, just
stay right here in this gym.

Sonny, Buddy, and Happy nod.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

But if you don't have a problem
with letting the Albuquerque Four
entertain you, follow me...

Lester, Jeannine, Frank, and Roy lead the rest of the throng
to the front of the gym.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

I know a place where they can
perform without people getting
upset about the band being
integrated.

LESTER

Kathryn...this I've gotta see.

EXT. LIBERTY CAFE - NIGHT

TRAFFIC ambles along both sides of Central Avenue.

INT. LIBERTY CAFE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

This intimate space behind the dining room fills up with PTA
participants...people who join Eddie and Bettie, who both
nurse drinks at a front table.

Peter and wife GRACIE FAMIGLIETTI (50s) relax at a middle table, where they, too, sip drinks.

Marlene passes by Gracie's and Peter's table.

The lounge customers watch the Albuquerque Four tune up. (Shirley fiddles around on a tinny-sounding 1900-19 upright piano...whose hammers stand exposed.)

MARLENE

Mr. and Mrs. Famiglietti, is everything all right?

PETER

Gracie, I don't get it.

GRACIE

Same here. What the hell are children doing in a bar?

MARLENE

Well...they wouldn't let 'em play at a PTA meeting tonight.

Gracie shakes her head sideways while Peter nods slowly.

Bettie beams as Eddie seethes.

BETTIE

Eddie...I've never heard your two youngest students play before.

EDDIE

I gotta go pee!

Eddie bolts out of his seat...

INT. LIBERTY CAFE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

...and, with STUNNED CUSTOMERS watching him, sprints out of the building!

INT. LIBERTY CAFE COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Amanda, Bettie, Elijah, Frank, Harriet, Kathryn, Lester, Roman, Roy, and Trudy groove to the Albuquerque Four's jazzed-up version of a nursery rhyme.

Peter, Jeannine, Horace, Gracie, Eloise, and the other patrons listen in happy-or-otherwise disbelief.

The four tuxedo-clad little girls end their tune...and set off lots of applause.

LESTER
 (to Frank and Jeannine)
 Mary Ellen doesn't know what she's
 missing.

FRANK
 Don't sweat it, Lester. Jeannine
 and I will make sure you get home.

JEANNINE
 (to Frank)
 We will?

Frank's nod is enthusiastic.

JEANNINE (CONT'D)
 We will!

As the applause dies, Franny, Rachel, Shirley, and Virginia
 eyeball the crowd.

RACHEL
 Thanks so very much, everybody!
 Give yourselves a hand!

The audience does just that.

SHIRLEY
 This next tune we'd like to do is
 dedicated to our mothers and
 fathers.

Trudy and Roman eye each other...Elijah and Harriet gaze upon
 one another...Amanda shows an ear-to-ear smile.

FRANNY
 We'd like to present...

VIRGINIA
 Irving Berlin's..."Always!"

After the ensuing applause ends, Shirley plays the chorus in
 that familiar waltz time.

Rachel takes over as the soloist for the first verse...when
 "Always" turns into a 4/4 swinger in which Virginia, Shirley,
 and Franny give Rachel a pulsing, pounding kind of rhythm.

The Albuquerque Four bring the tune back to its chorus. This
 time, Rachel's trombone "responses" answer Shirley's piano
 "calls" while Franny and Virginia keep the beat going.

TRUDY

Roman, too bad Cliff isn't here.
He'd get a kick outa this.

Roman puts on an ear-to-ear grin.

In the second verse, Shirley becomes the soloist...and she gives the audience a rinky-tinky frolic.

When the refrain comes back around, Rachel's trombone "calls" and Shirley's piano "responds."

Now the music thins down to Virginia's bass...and Gracie turns to Peter.

GRACIE

Those are Roman and Trudy's kids up there.

Peter's nod is enthusiastic.

GRACIE (CONT'D)

Peter, how old you say they were?

PETER

(taking a swig)
Shirley...she's playing
piano...she's eleven. And Franny's
on drums. She's ten.

Gracie gasps...and the other customers watch Virginia's turn with the chorus give way to Franny's drum solo.

Virginia, Franny, Shirley, and Rachel team up to take the refrain around one more time...in raucous fashion.

Result: The foursome's parents and Kathryn applaud.

The band brings "Always" to a jubilant end...and brings on strong applause from the customers (and from Marlene).

EXT. LIBERTY CAFE - NIGHT

Trudy, Harriet, Bettie, Amanda, Roman, Elijah, bass-toting Virginia, Shirley, Rachel (with her trombone), and Franny stroll out of the place in boundless jubilation.

BETTIE

You youngsters did it! You got a standing ovation at the end of your show! All four of you deserved it!

SHIRLEY

Well, thanks, Mrs. Pitlock!

RACHEL

And thanks for supporting us!

Eddie jumps out of his parked 1936 GMC truck. He runs toward the band, its members' parents, and Bettie.

He wags a finger at the Evanses.

EDDIE

So this is it, huh?

BETTIE

Eddie, you missed a great performance! Those kids put on a great show!

EDDIE

Yeah? Well, so what?

ROMAN

You could've stayed and watched your two young students jazz up the Liberty Cafe.

BETTIE

(pointing to Eddie)

And besides, your bladder isn't that big--

EDDIE

Stay in your place, Bettie!

Eddie moves in on Franny and Shirley.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Speaking of place...some people don't know their place!

ELIJAH

Eddie, don't start that crap again!

EDDIE

SHUT UP!

(to Franny and Shirley)

Get yourselves another flight instructor. You gotta pay more attention to who you hang out with!

As Rachel, Franny, and Shirley look flummoxed (and Virginia stares at the pavement), Eddie drags Bettie to the GMC truck.

Roman and Trudy look lost while Elijah, Harriet, and Amanda stare in anger at Eddie.

INT. EUGENE FIELD SCHOOL SCIENCE ROOM - DAY

Leonard and a glum Franny sit next to each other as they and their classmates await the start of today's session.

LEONARD

I heard your band didn't get to play in the gym last night.

FRANNY

(bangs her textbook)
Now I know how Marian Anderson felt seven years ago when the DAR wouldn't let her sing at Constitution Hall.

Roy enters the room just as Leonard slams his own textbook.

LEONARD

Franny, did the band get a chance to play anyplace?

ROY

Leonard, you shoulda been to the Liberty Cafe last night.

Leonard's mouth flies open.

ROY (CONT'D)

That Albuquerque Four burnt that place up!

Roy catches Leonard's big smile...and Franny's forlorn look.

LEONARD

Sounds like the Albuquerque Four had a Lincoln Memorial moment after all.

ROY

Leonard's doggone right about that, Franny. You and Shirley and Rachel and Virginia oughta be real proud.

FRANNY

Wish I could.

Franny places her chin on her fists.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

Mr. Plasman, my sister and I have to find another flight instructor.

ROY

Was that the guy that ran outa there like he found out they canceled Mardi Gras?

Virginia leaves her seat and joins the conversation.

LEONARD

Yep. Eddie Pitlock. War hero.

VIRGINIA

He flew a hundred and fourteen combat missions in the Pacific.

FRANNY

That's him.

Franny looks up and sees Virginia.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

One day, he and Shirley and I are bob-bob-bobbin' along...the next day, it's like "I'll be glad when you're dead, you rascal you!"

VIRGINIA

That's it. When I get home this afternoon, I'm gonna try and learn both of those songs.

Virginia, Roy, Leonard, and Franny break into laughter.

INT. EVANSES' KITCHEN - NIGHT

At the dinner table, an erect Trudy slices a pot roast while Shirley, Roman, and Franny wait in their seats.

TRUDY

Okay, everybody. Pass me your plates.

The three remaining Evanses pass their plates simultaneously.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

Youngest first.

While Roman and Shirley retract their plates, Franny passes hers to Trudy...who puts a slice of roast on it.

FRANNY

Thanks, Mama.

Shirley gives her plate to Trudy as Roman and Franny start bowls of other fixin's around.

SHIRLEY

Daddy, you and Mr. Pitlock trained here in town at the same time over at Kirtland.

ROMAN

Yes, he and I did.

Trudy sticks a slice of roast on Shirley's plate, then follows suit with Roman's plate.

SHIRLEY

Did he hate other people back then, too?

(accepts plate)

Thanks a bunch, Mama.

ROMAN

Shirley...he did.

Roman accepts his plate from Trudy, who now places a piece of roast on her own plate.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

He never could understand that the Japanese and the Germans who fought in the war were following orders from their leaders.

(takes a bite)

They were trying to defend their countries.

Trudy sits down.

FRANNY

Just like we and our allies were trying to defend our own countries.

TRUDY

I mean...it's human nature to defend what's yours.

Trudy starts a gravy boat around the table.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

And besides, no matter what Mr. Pitlock believes, people of all races helped us win the war.

Shirley, Roman, and Franny AD LIB their agreement with Trudy.

FRANNY

I didn't like it when Mr. Pitlock kept trying to shush me and Shirley up about the Tuskegee Airmen.

SHIRLEY

Or about Bessie Coleman.
(downs her milk)
Even if she didn't live long enough to see World War 2.

FRANNY

I wonder what Mr. Pitlock would've done to us if we'd mentioned the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

SHIRLEY

Or that it was the most decorated regiment we've ever had.

Franny starts a plate of bread around.

FRANNY

Come to think of it...he would've probably told us to shut up.

INT. EVANSES' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Roman, Trudy, Shirley, and Franny crowd around the coffee table, where they read the phone book and today's edition of the "Albuquerque Journal."

ROMAN

I know...your mama and I know...you still wanna be pilots.

TRUDY

And if all four of us think hard, we'll find a flight instructor who truly gets that it took all hands on deck to win the war.

The Evans sisters eyeball each other.

SHIRLEY

All hands on deck.

FRANNY

You think we'll get a former Navy pilot for our next instructor?

The young drummer and the young pianist shrug.

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

Nervous excitement grips Trudy, Shirley, Franny, and Roman as they walk toward the hangar on this hot, dry Saturday.

The nervousness ends when ERNIE MENDOZA (25, fun-loving) comes out of the hangar to meet the Family Evans.

ERNIE

You must be the Evans family.

TRUDY

That's us!

Ernie and the Evanses shake hands.

ERNIE

Which two of you have been taking flying lessons?

Roman grins big...Franny and Shirley raise their hands.

FRANNY

Shirley and I are looking for a new instructor.

SHIRLEY

And Franny and I have nine weeks under our belts as flight students...actually, nine Saturdays under our belts.

ERNIE

Franny, Shirley...that's a start.

Some heads nod.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

My name's Ernie...Ernie Mendoza. Whaddya say the three of us take it the rest of the way?

Shirley and Franny look at each other, then at Ernie.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

I'd be more than honored to be your flight instructor.

SHIRLEY

And we'd be more than honored to be
your newest students.

FRANNY

Yeah!

Ernie and his two newest students shake hands while Roman and Trudy cheer prior to shaking Ernie's hand.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

Franny, Shirley, and Ernie walk around that 1946 Stinson 108.

SHIRLEY

This is as far as we got when
our...well, when we last had a
lesson.

Franny yanks a small notebook and a pencil (or pen) from her shirt pocket (or blouse pocket).

FRANNY

We didn't get to fill out a weight-
and-balance sheet last time.

ERNIE

Don't worry...I'll show both of you
how to do that.

Big Sis and Little Sis look gleeful.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

We're gonna cover a lot of
ground...but the main thing is:
We're gonna have fun doing it!

Shirley and Franny flash the "okay" sign.

SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - STINSON 108 - DAY

Ernie, Shirley, and Franny check the ailerons, flaps, and rudders for free movement.

Eddie's replacement cleans off a fuel measuring rod before he finds out how much is in the tank(s).

Franny pulls a dipstick out of the Stinson's engine to determine the oil level.

Ernie shows Shirley how to drain a small amount of fuel into a glass tool...to see if the fuel's contaminated.

He produces an official weight-and-balance sheet...and shows his two little students how to fill it out.

Now the threesome check the plane for body damage. (All three look satisfied.)

Bad news: They've got to stock up on emergency supplies.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Ernie and Franny sit in the plane's front seats; Shirley occupies a back seat...and leans over to look at the cockpit.

ERNIE

(gripping the yoke)
What I'm holding in my hands looks like the steering wheel on a car...but it's actually called a flight control.

SHIRLEY

Not only that, Mr. Mendoza...it's also called a yoke.

ERNIE

Absolutely right, Shirley!

FRANNY

The yoke controls the nose of the plane. Wings, too. You push to go down and pull to go up.

SHIRLEY

You use the left to roll left and you use the right to roll right.

ERNIE

Wow...you two have learned a lot from your father.

FRANNY

Well...we did.

The two youngsters flash wide smiles.

SHIRLEY

But we also learned a lot from books at the library...and classmates...and Franny's back issues of "Popular Mechanics."

FRANNY

And you should see our collection of paper airplanes.

Ernie's mouth hangs open.

INT. SUPERIOR LUMBER COMPANY WAREHOUSE - DAY

A line forms at the time clock...where Roman punches in and Cliff waits right behind him.

Cliff notices Roman's upbeat, confident look.

CLIFF

Hey! Look who woke up on the right side of the bed!

Roman walks away from the time clock and watches Cliff register his own "in" time.

EXT. SUPERIOR LUMBER COMPANY - DAY

Roman's back at his forklift, where he transfers two-by-fours from a large pile to a waiting truck.

Right on target every time!

Cliff notices...and beams.

EXT. ROOSEVELT PARK - DAY

On this nice Saturday morning, Alan, Franny, Leonard, Shirley, and Vernon launch paper planes from the middle of the park.

Shirley's and Franny's paper airplanes look more elaborate than the twosome's previous ones.

And the two girls' planes stay in flight as long as the three boys' own paper aircraft.

ALAN

Well, I'll be a...

VERNON

Franny...Shirley...you won me over.

LEONARD
 Congratulations!

The three little boys shake hands with the two little girls.

FRANNY
 All those old "Popular Mechanics"
 magazines paid off.

SHIRLEY
 (to Leonard)
 But all the things you showed us
 put us over the top.

The five Eugene Field School students stroll to retrieve
 their paper planes...

LEONARD
 Thanks, Shirley. Really nice of you
 to say that.

...when Sonny strides into the area with his own paper plane.

SONNY
 Look who's here trying to fly paper
 airplanes!

ALAN
 Sonny, don't start that stuff--

Sonny moves in on Franny and Shirley.

SONNY
 You wanna fly a real plane, but you
 can't even drive a doggone car!

Leonard, Vernon, and Alan converge on Sonny.

VERNON
 Lay off!

FRANNY
 Yeah, Sonny! Show us what you can
 do!

SONNY
 Well, my daddy's an air traffic--

FRANNY
 (pointing at Sonny)
 No! You show us what you bring to
 the table!

SHIRLEY

Franny...I'm afraid he already has.

A disgusted, defeated Sonny leaves the park.

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

Ernie, Franny, and Shirley climb aboard the Stinson 108.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

While Franny sits in back, Ernie and Shirley occupy the two front seats.

ERNIE

Okay, Shirley...show me the fuel mixture knob and the throttle.

SHIRLEY

You bet!

Shirley points to a black knob; Franny leans over for a look.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

That's the throttle.

ERNIE

That's right!

Franny's sister points to a red knob.

SHIRLEY

And this is the fuel mixture knob.

ERNIE

Correct!

FRANNY

The throttle controls thrust. And the fuel mixture knob controls the fuel-to-air ratio.

Ernie's nod is slow.

SHIRLEY

Sometimes, you want the gas to be lean. Sometimes, you want it to be rich.

Shirley catches Ernie's awed look.

FRANNY

Shirley and I learned the eight instruments.

ERNIE

Uh huh.

SHIRLEY

On the aircraft.

FRANNY

Compass, airspeed indicator, altimeter, tachometer, oil pressure indicator, oil temperature indicator, fuel level indicator, and ammeter.

Shirley points to each instrument as Franny names it off.

ERNIE

Very...good!

SHIRLEY

Why, thanks, Mr. Mendoza!

ERNIE

Speaking of instruments...your folks tell me you're both very fine musicians.

Shirley blushes...Franny shrugs.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

Franny continues to lean forward in her seat to watch her sister and their flight instructor.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

Shirley, take a look at those pedals on your side of the floor.

SHIRLEY

They're rudder pedals.

FRANNY

Both the pilot and the copilot have rudder pedals to work with.

SHIRLEY

At least here on this Stinson 108.

ERNIE

That's the truth. Thing about a rudder is: It's hooked up to the vertical stabilizer...so if you wanna make changes to go left or right on the vertical axis, that's what the rudder pedals are for.

Shirley and Franny shake their heads "yes."

FRANNY

And if you need to turn on the ground, you use the rudder pedals or the brakes.

Ernie's all smiles.

ERNIE

You know...we've got a few adult students who could use your help.

A flummoxed Franny points to herself, then at Shirley.

INT. EVANSES' KITCHEN - DAY

Trudy tenderizes steaks while the table radio BLASTS OUT another "Ma Perkins" episode.

When the plot thickens, the Evanses' doorbell RINGS.

TRUDY

Coming!

She sprints away from the kitchen into:

INT. EVANSES' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Trudy opens the front door...and finds Roman opposite her.

In back of him: Cliff, Dale, Gracie, and Peter.

EXT. EVANSES' HOUSE - DAY

The quintet watch Trudy's mouth hang open.

TRUDY

Uh...come in, everybody.

ROMAN

No, it's okay. You come out.

Trudy shrugs, closes the front door, and steps outside.

TRUDY
Did the lumber yard burn down?

CLIFF
No, no! Not at all, Trudy!

PETER
Truth is...Dale had a great idea.

DALE
Wait a minute, Pete--

ROMAN
Honey, Peter was talking about the great job you did when you worked at the lumber yard.

CLIFF
(to Trudy)
And Roman told me you've started fixing cars on the side...

PETER
And we wanted to show our appreciation for what you did during the war.

GRACIE
Trudy...come around to the garage.

Trudy, Gracie, Roman, Peter, Dale, and Cliff stroll toward:

EXT. EVANSES' GARAGE - DAY

Gracie points toward a 1936 Ford pickup truck parked outside the garage.

GRACIE
I understand you're partial to Fords...so we...the whole company...chipped in and got you this pickup.

Trudy's stunned out of her wits.

ROMAN
Honey...this means you won't have to lug auto parts on the bus anymore.

Roman's wife winces toward the Ford truck and checks the vehicle front to back.

She saunters toward the rest of the throng; she shakes Peter's, Dale's, Gracie's, and Cliff's hands.

TRUDY

Thank you...I would've taken any truck from any company that makes trucks, as long as it starts up and gets me where I want to go, but...

Trudy's husband strolls toward her. He dredges up the Ford truck's keys and hands them to her.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

(accepts keys)

Thank...you...so...very...much...

Roman and Trudy hug and kiss to the tune of throng applause.

EXT. EVANSES' HOUSE - NIGHT

All the lights blaze on inside...some balloons hang from a tree...cars surround the house during this June night.

INT. EVANSES' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's party time!

Exhibit A: A homemade banner that reads: "CONGRATULATIONS, 6TH GRADE GRADS."

What's more, it's a potluck...and the Brechler, Evans, and Peters families eat and eat (when they don't engage in AD LIBBED chatter).

Delilah Mae, Sally Jo, Vernon, Horace, and Eloise gab and chow down alongside VICTOR and BESS TODMAN (both 50s; Vernon's parents).

Shirley, Franny, Rachel, Virginia, Vernon, and Sally Jo wear their school duds.

HORACE

(shakes Victor's hand)

Victor, it's nice to meet you and Bess.

ELOISE

(shaking Bess' hand)

Nice to meet you both.

VICTOR

Horace, what do you do for a living?

HORACE
I'm an engineer at KOB.

VERNON
(to Sally Jo)
Uh oh...

VICTOR
I'm the general manager at KGGM.

Victor and Horace give each other the evil eye. The two men
AD LIB their rivalry when Bess moves in between them.

BESS
Don't you two wanna hear about
Franny's and Shirley's grandma?

SALLY JO
Mrs. Hodgkins, did you have to give
your job back when the war ended?

DELILAH MAE
Nope...I'm still an oil company
geologist in Houston, Texas.

Eloise, Horace, and Victor stare Delilah Mae down.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

The sofa and extra chairs dominate half the room...a room
where Kathryn, Lester, Roy, Frank, Jeannine, Dale, Cliff, and
Ernie join the Evanses' other guests.

ROMAN
Lester, I heard you lost a leg on
Guadalcanal.

LESTER
And I sure wish I had it back. I--

The doorbell RINGS.

ROMAN
Be right back.

Roman opens the front door...and finds Leonard and his mom
HONEY LOU CARTER (40s) on the other side.

ROMAN (CONT'D)
Leonard...Mrs. Carter...come in.
Glad you're here.

Honey Lou and her son stroll into the room.

HONEY LOU
Sorry we're late, Mr. Evans.

LEONARD
Mama had to work late at the
factory.

Trudy approaches Honey Lou and Leonard.

TRUDY
We're just glad you made it
tonight...there's still plenty of
food in the kitchen.

Franny, Rachel, Shirley, and Virginia (all four now in tuxes)
abandon their respective instruments and meet Leonard and
Honey Lou. (The hammers stand exposed on the Evanses' piano.)

TRUDY (CONT'D)
You two just help yourselves.

SHIRLEY
(to Honey Lou and Leonard)
We're so glad you're here...and
you're just in time for the
entertainment portion!

Honey Lou's and Leonard's eyes light up.

SAME SCENE - STILL LATER

The Carters and some other guests chow down as the
Albuquerque Four transform a 1900-29 song into a jump tune.

DELILAH MAE
Trudy...Roman...I've never seen the
inside of your piano before.

ROMAN
It's the first time me and Trudy
have seen it, too.

When the four girls' music heats up, the doorbell RINGS.

A smiling Trudy opens the door...but Mary Ellen's presence on
the other side wipes the smile off Trudy's face.

TRUDY
No. You're not gonna spoil this
party the way you spoiled the PTA
meeting last month.

MARY ELLEN
I've thought about that.

While Roman hurries to Trudy's side, the music stops.

ROMAN
Mrs. Margenthaler, we didn't invite
you. Sorry.

MARY ELLEN
I just want to--

HARRIET
Don't let that witch in here!

Virginia, Shirley, Rachel, and Franny stroll toward the door.
Harriet, Elijah, and Amanda rush to the door, too.

MARY ELLEN
I only wanted to stop by to
apologize--

AMANDA
(pointing to Mary Ellen)
YOU BETTER BE RIGHT!

Shirley escorts a distraught Mary Ellen inside...and causes
her bandmates' mouths to fly open.

SHIRLEY
It's the only way Mrs.
Margenthaler's gonna find out what
she's been missing.

RACHEL
I...see your point, Shirl.

VIRGINIA
Yeah. Me, too.

Franny nods at Shirley.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

Shirley, Virginia, Franny, and Rachel sit at or hold their
instruments while Mary Ellen addresses the other revelers.

MARY ELLEN
Anyway...Lester told me that the
Albuquerque Four received a
standing ovation at the Liberty
Cafe last month. The cocktail
lounge part.

Lester shakes his head "yes."

MARY ELLEN (CONT'D)

They played in a bar because I let my prejudice get in the way.

ELIJAH

She got that right, Harriet.

Mary Ellen turns to the Albuquerque Four.

MARY ELLEN

Franny, Shirley, Rachel, and Virginia...I humbly apologize to you and your parents for denying you a chance at the PTA meeting last month.

Dead silence in the house...for a few seconds.

SHIRLEY

Mrs. Margenthaler...we forgive you.

Shirley and Mary Ellen walk toward each other...and hug.

Franny, Rachel, and Virginia AD LIB their agreement while they join in the embrace.

Once they break the hug:

MARY ELLEN

Now...I've heard that Trudy makes the best cherry pie in the neighborhood.

A blushing Trudy shrugs.

MARY ELLEN (CONT'D)

And I've also heard that you just can't beat Harriet's barbecue ribs.

Harriet looks flummoxed...then flattered. She eyes Elijah.

HARRIET

Elijah, did you hear that?

MARY ELLEN

Kathryn...did you bring your guitar?

KATHRYN

It's in the kitchen!

Kathryn heads toward the kitchen.

SAME SCENE - LATER YET

Trombonist Rachel, bassist Virginia, drummer Franny, and pianist Shirley provide a stompin' rhythm as Kathryn shreds on her electric guitar.

FRANNY

Let's hear it for our school's
music teacher!

ROY

Extraordinaire!

The Albuquerque Four's audience applauds...and that includes Mary Ellen, whose face shows a touch of barbecue sauce.

EXT. EVANSES' HOUSE - DAY

Trudy (the driver), Roman, Shirley, and Franny climb out of the family's 1935 Ford sedan and walk toward the house.

FRANNY

If the pastor had come to the party last Friday night, he wouldn't've started his sermon this morning quoting that Old Testament line against men wearing women's clothes and women wearing men's clothes.

TRUDY

I don't know if he likes modern jazz, though, Fran.

Roman reaches into his pants pocket.

ROMAN

(pulls out house keys)
But I see why you four girls wear tuxedos when you're out there making music.

SHIRLEY

It's just like Franny says: It's about keeping the boys and their daddies from wondering what's between our legs.

Six eyes gaze at a nodding, grinning Franny.

Roman unlocks the front door...

INT. EVANSES' LIVING ROOM - DAY

...and the foursome find the phone RINGING AND RINGING.

Roman sprints toward the phone.

ROMAN
(into phone)
Hello?

BUDDY (V.O.)
(mimics John Wayne)
Hey, flyboy...you've lost control
of your family.

ROMAN
Now you wait a minute!

Trudy, Shirley, and Franny gather around Roman.

BUDDY (V.O.)
(mimics Humphrey Bogart)
You're shupposed to be in
charge...but you've let ya wife and
daughters wear the pants in ya
family.

ROMAN
Look! I don't have to take this!

BUDDY (V.O.)
(mimics Groucho Marx)
Literally.

Roman hangs up...but the phone RINGS AGAIN.

ROMAN
(into phone)
Hello?

EDDIE (V.O.)
(mimics James Cagney)
Looks like we're gonna have to do
to you what the Axis Powers
couldn't do to you.

Franny, Trudy, and Shirley watch Roman slam the phone down.

TRUDY
(hugging Roman)
Honey...let's sit down.

Trudy and a stunned Roman hold hands on the way to the sofa. When the two parents sit down, Shirley goes to a chair.

SHIRLEY

Franny...maybe you'd better sit down, too.

FRANNY

I wanna see if the phone's gonna ring again first.

Franny waits a few more seconds before she finds a seat at her drum set.

TRUDY

Roman, honey...what was all that on the phone?

Roman takes a deep breath or two.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

If you don't want to tell us right now, that's okay. We'll still be here for you.

ROMAN

Whoever just called me does a bad James Cagney. And a bad Humphrey Bogart. And an even worse John Wayne.

The three Evans females shake their heads.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

His Groucho Marx wasn't too bad.

Trudy attempts a grin.

INT. SUPERIOR LUMBER COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

Roman sits across the desk from Dale, who reclines in his own seat and fumbles a pencil.

DALE

A death threat...oh boy...

ROMAN

Trudy, Shirley, Franny, and I spent the last twenty-four hours wondering who'd want to get me. All I know is: He wants to do what the Axis Powers couldn't do to me.

DALE

What else struck you about this phone call from yesterday...besides the bad impersonations?

Dale watches Roman lean forward.

ROMAN

Well, Dale, he talked about how my wife and our daughters are wearing the pants in our family. Literally.

DALE

Did this man go to the party at your house on Friday night?

Roman stares into space for a few moments.

ROMAN

I don't know...but I don't think he ever went to see that movie Shirley Temple did the year before America entered the war.

DALE

(stroking his chin)

Hmmm...what movie was that, Roman?

ROMAN

That was "Young People."

A grin takes over on Roman's face.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

All four of us went to see it. Early on, Shirley Temple, Jack Oakie, and Charlotte Greenwood did a song-and-dance routine.

Dale writes it all down in a notebook.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

And all three of 'em were wearing tuxedos.

(pointing to Dale)

And nobody in the theater wondered what was between Shirley Temple's or Charlotte Greenwood's legs.

Roman's grin becomes a smile.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Those three were a sensation. The kids're the first to tell you that.

DALE

Speaking of sensation...you sure you don't want a cigarette?

ROMAN

I'm fine.

Both men shake their heads "yes."

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Ernie and Franny sit in front...Shirley sits in back as the threesome circle Albuquerque.

FRANNY

Ernie, I just feel like I'm the reason someone's out to kill Daddy.

Shirley's mouth flies open.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

I mean, if whoever called Daddy hadn't ragged about me and Shirley wearing tuxes...

ERNIE

Franny, that's not true. Whoever's trying to kill your daddy is the one to blame. It's not your fault or Shirley's.

SHIRLEY

You hear that, Franny?

Ernie catches Franny's nod.

ERNIE

You ready to take over the radio? We're about to land.

FRANNY

Sure!

Franny grabs a mike from the dashboard (or dons a headset).

FRANNY (CONT'D)

(into device's mike)
"Little Drummer" to control.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

"Little Drummer" to control. "Young
Cutter" is about to land.

ERNIE

Great job!

Ernie and Franny trade smiles.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Ernie (in the front passenger seat) shows Franny (behind the yoke in front) how to pull back on the yoke.

Franny's in a booster seat if it's needed.

He and back-seat passenger Shirley cheer when the Stinson leaves the West Mesa runway and...rises into the air.

Shirley's now behind the yoke (and maybe in a booster seat) in this new session. She checks the vertical speed...

EXT. STINSON 108 - DAY

...the plane's flaps and landing gear return to neutral.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Franny fixates on one instrument...but Ernie and Shirley gesture her into checking all eight Stinson instruments.

It figures:

EXT. STINSON 108 - DAY

The plane's nose dips down...but now climbs back up.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Another new session...and Ernie shows Shirley how to trim the plane for a safe and level flight.

A smiling Shirley notices the controls' smoother touch.

Franny (now behind the yoke) turns (banks) the aircraft...and Ernie looks satisfied.

In this next session, Shirley learns to set the controls for cruising to concentrate on leveling the plane.

EXT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Franny lands the plane...and breathes relief before she, Ernie, and Shirley whoop it up.

When Shirley lands the Stinson, she blows kisses to Franny and Ernie...then breathes a sigh of relief.

END MONTAGE

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

Ernie, Franny, and Shirley stroll toward the hangar.

SHIRLEY

Mr. Mendoza, I'm glad you're our flight instructor.

FRANNY

(nodding at Ernie)

You were right about us both learning a lot...and still having fun at it.

ERNIE

Well, you two help make it fun.

Smiles cross the three faces.

ERNIE (CONT'D)

Matter of fact...you two have made so much progress these last three and a half weeks. I think you're each ready to take control of a plane.

Shirley and Franny eyeball each other, then Ernie.

FRANNY

Well...I'll be a...

ERNIE

How does June twenty-ninth grab you?

SHIRLEY

Franny, let's grab it!

FRANNY

I'm grabbing it, Shirley! And I'm not gonna let go!

The two jazz-playing sisters jump for joy. They gesture Ernie into jumping...and the threesome make it a bouncy group hug.

Buddy enters the area...and cringes.

EXT. CENTRAL AVENUE - NIGHT

TRAFFIC (including that 1936 Ford truck) tools along the city's main drag.

INT. FORD TRUCK - NIGHT

Driver Trudy and a blindfolded Roman cruise along.

ROMAN
Where're we going?

TRUDY
I'm not telling.

Roman grabs his blindfold...but retracts his hands when Trudy catches a sideways glance.

TRUDY (CONT'D)
But I'll tell you this: No matter how many combat missions you flew in the war...no matter how many years you've worked at Superior Lumber...I'll always love you.

ROMAN
I'll always love you, too...whether you're fixing dinner or fixing a car.

EXT. ALVARADO HOTEL - NIGHT

The truck pulls into the parking lot of this sprawling, iconic, Mission Revival-style space.

Trudy jumps out of the truck, then runs to the other side to help Roman, who opens the right-side door.

TRUDY
Roman, honey...you can take your blindfold off.

Roman rips his blindfold off, jumps out of the truck, and breaks into a huge smile.

ROMAN
I'll be a...this is where we first met...seventeen years ago...

The forklift driver and the auto mechanic smooch each other.

INT. ALVARADO HOTEL DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Trudy and Roman saunter into an enormous space whose tables seat octets...and whose seats are half full of CUSTOMERS.

ROMAN

You used to wait tables here,
Trudy, hon...

TRUDY

We were both freshmen at the
University of New Mexico.

Still on the stroll toward the front tables, Roman and Trudy drape their arms around each other.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

And you were one heck of a
basketball player for the Lobos.

ROMAN

Thanks...I always thought I was one
heck of a benchwarmer.

Mary Ellen, Lester, Harriet, Elijah, Cliff, Amanda, Peter,
and Gracie sit at two of the front tables.

All eight customers gesture Trudy and Roman toward the front.

CLIFF

C'mon over, you two!

GRACIE

We saved you a couple of empty
seats!

Roman and his wife slide into two of the empty chairs at the
two front tables.

Franny, Rachel, Shirley, and Virginia (all in white tuxes
this time) occupy a makeshift bandstand at the front...where
they jazz up a 1920s ballad.

Trudy and her husband look wide-eyed when they see Shirley
playing a beat-up upright piano from the 1890-1909 period.
(Yep...its hammers stand exposed.)

ROMAN

I thought this was the ritziest
hotel in town.

LESTER

It is...they just didn't have
enough room for a grand piano on
that bandstand.

Roman nods...he and Trudy hold hands.

TRUDY

You just can't top this night.

It's Kissing Time!

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

The bandmembers' parents and friends dine (as do the other
customers) as the Albuquerque Four wrap up a nursery rhyme
turned into a driving ballad led by Rachel on trombone.

Peter points in disbelief to Cliff, then to Amanda.

PETER

Is this for real?

AMANDA

Peter, I found out Cliff likes to
shoot pool. Just like I do.

Applause breaks out...Shirley steps up to the mike.

SHIRLEY

(into mike)

Thank you so much for coming out to
the Alvarado Hotel tonight. Give
yourselves a hand!

When the clapping kicks back in, Virginia, Rachel, and Franny
leave their instruments and join Shirley at the mike.

VIRGINIA

(into mike)

We hope to come back here soon!

FRANNY

(into mike)

And often!

RACHEL

(into mike)

Last...but not least...we wanna
thank Mrs. Margenthaler for not
only inviting us to play...but also
inviting our parents and their
friends to watch us perform!

Mary Ellen catches surprised looks from
tablemates...especially Elijah and Harriet.

MARY ELLEN
It almost didn't happen.

Lester shakes his head "yes."

MARY ELLEN (CONT'D)
I told the management: "If you
don't let the Albuquerque Four
perform at the Alvarado and let all
their mothers and both fathers come
to watch, and eat, we'll never set
foot in your hotel again!"

HARRIET
Mary Ellen, thanks for being a
Glinda.

ELIJAH
(to Mary Ellen)
Don't worry. Glinda was good.

Harriet and Mary Ellen flash big smiles at one another.

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

It's the big day!

Cliff, Dale, Delilah Mae, Kathryn, Roy, the Brechlers, the
Carters, the Goodsons, the Margenthalers, the Peterses, and
the Todmans surround Ernie and the Evanses near the hangar.

Some people fan themselves on this hot, muggy Saturday.

LEONARD
Good luck...best of luck to you,
Franny and Shirley.

FRANNY
Thank you, Leonard!

SHIRLEY
That goes double for me.

Shirley, Leonard, Honey Lou, and Franny hug.

HONEY LOU
Both you girls...you're doing
something extraordinary.

Delilah Mae receives Trudy's movie camera while Franny walks to Delilah Mae's side.

FRANNY

Grandma, we flipped a coin.
Shirley's flying first.

Franny catches Delilah Mae's nod...as Victor and Horace break out radio microphones.

Ernie, Roman, Shirley, and Trudy head for the Stinson 108...only to find Eddie (toolbox in his grip) checking the plane out.

ERNIE

Eddie...that's our job.

Eddie storms away from the airplane...his toolbox flies open and some screwdrivers fall to the ground.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Ernie sits in the copilot's seat, Trudy and Roman have the two back seats, and Shirley occupies the pilot's seat.

If needed, a booster seat helps Shirley see.

The young pianist checks the plane's instruments and all its controls while Ernie watches her.

ERNIE

Shirley, how do you feel?

Shirley gives Ernie the "okay" sign. He nods her into starting the Stinson.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

Shirley taxis the 108 down a runway.

SHIRLEY

(into mike)
"Bright Eyes" to control. "Bright
Eyes" to control. We're ready to
take off.

Once she receives the SIGNAL to do so, Shirley pulls back on the yoke...and the plane pierces the sky!

Ernie smiles while Roman and Trudy applaud.

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

A gleeful Delilah Mae shoots footage as those around her applaud the ascension.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Ernie turns to Shirley.

ERNIE

Remember what we talked about when we set this up: Just circle the city.

SHIRLEY

Will do!
 (into mike)
 "Bright Eyes" to control...we're circling the city. We're going counterclockwise.

EXT. STINSON 108 - DAY

The airplane gains altitude as it flies over Albuquerque.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Shirley checks the plane's instruments...Ernie observes his young pilot trainee...Roman and Trudy look out the windows.

ERNIE

Shirley...your mom and dad told me you got started in music at a young age.

The little ivory tickler blushes.

TRUDY

She won't tell you, Mr. Mendoza. She doesn't like to talk about it too much...

ROMAN

But we were at a next-door neighbor's house. They had an old upright, and Shirley was two back then. And she was banging on it...

Shirley's blush turns into a grin.

EXT. STINSON 108 - DAY

The 1946 plane makes its way toward its destination.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Ernie watches as Shirley takes the aircraft out of cruise mode. He, Trudy, and Roman look pleased.

And Shirley looks calm.

ERNIE

You ready to park this Stinson back
at ol' West Mesa?

SHIRLEY

If I'm not ready, then this isn't
Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Cheers erupt from the three adults.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

With a West Mesa Airport runway in sight, Shirley pushes the yoke in an effort to land the plane.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

"Bright Eyes" to control. "Bright
Eyes" to control...we're about to
land the Stinson 108.

Shirley glances at the eight Stinson gages and at the runway...and bites her lip.

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

Delilah Mae continues to shoot footage as the Stinson 108 heads for a runway...and Franny and Rachel jump for joy.

Leonard, Sally Jo, and Vernon look ecstatic while Virginia and some adults stand with crossed fingers and bated breath.

The plane comes closer to the ground...it reaches the runway...it eases to a stop.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Shirley shuts the plane off and blows kisses to Trudy, Roman, and Ernie.

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

Her parents and her flight teacher climb out of the 108; Shirley follows...and ignites cheers from the crowd.

Franny sprints her way to Shirley.

FRANNY

You did it! You did it!

An openmouthed Shirley hugs Franny...and Delilah Mae captures the embrace.

The hugs multiply when Roman, Ernie, Trudy, Roy, and Kathryn jump in...while Horace and Victor move in (mikes in hand) to try to interview Albuquerque's newest celebrity.

SHIRLEY

Franny--

FRANNY

Congratulations, big sister!

SHIRLEY

Uh...thank you!

Victor and Horace shove their mikes in Shirley's face.

HORACE

Shirley--

VICTOR

How was it?

SHIRLEY

(into mikes)

It was quite an experience...flying a plane where one of the wings started to loosen up.

Ernie and Roman nod as Horace and his rival look stunned.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

Ernie, Franny, Roman, Shirley, and Trudy check the plane when Eddie (toolbox and all) scrambles over to the quintet.

EDDIE

This plane's safe to fly.

TRUDY

Don't you have another four-seater at this airport?

A smug Eddie shakes his head "no."

ROMAN

How about another training plane?

EDDIE
They're all taken.

Dead silence grips the place as Eddie walks away.

ERNIE
Mr. Pitlock's right.

The Evanses and Ernie huddle up.

FRANNY
I'd feel worse about this if we
didn't have a war hero in this
huddle.

Roman grins.

The two children and three adults break the huddle. While Shirley finds Delilah Mae, Trudy, Roman, Franny, and Ernie climb aboard the Stinson.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Roman and Trudy occupy the back seats, Ernie's the copilot, and Franny sits behind the yoke at maybe a boosted seat.

Ernie watches Franny check the controls and instruments.

ERNIE
Franny, how do you feel?

A nodding Franny starts the airplane.

FRANNY
Mr. Mendoza...Mama...Daddy...I've
got some things I wanna do just in
case.

ROMAN
What do you have in mind?

FRANNY
Top secret.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

The youngest Evans taxis the plane down a runway.

FRANNY (CONT'D)
(into mike)
"Little Drummer" to control.
"Little Drummer" to control. Ready
to take off.

Franny receives the SIGNAL, pulls the yoke, and...sends the Stinson airborne!

ERNIE

As long as this plane lets us, go ahead and circle the city.

FRANNY

(nodding toward Ernie)

As long as it's a real round trip, I'll be happy.

(into mike)

"Little Drummer" to control. We're traveling in a loop around the city...counterclockwise.

Ernie looks upward and folds his hands as if to pray.

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

Delilah Mae films Franny's flight while Shirley and her fellow onlookers gaze skyward.

EXT. STINSON 108 - DAY

The four-seater gains altitude as it circles the Duke City.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Ernie watches Franny check the gages.

Roman and Trudy look out the windows...only to see smoke pour from the engine!

The backseat twosome hold each other's hands.

FRANNY

Time to let the top secret out of the bag.

The young drummer checks her instruments...

EXT. STINSON 108 - DAY

...and banks the still-smoking 108 to turn back, in a beeline, toward the West Mesa Airport.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Franny grits her teeth while her passengers look concerned.

FRANNY

(to Ernie)

Mr. Plasman likes to tell his students two things...

ERNIE

As long as they save all four of us.

FRANNY

One: "Where there's smoke, there's fire." And two: "The shortest distance between two points is a straight line."

ROMAN

Why didn't my flight instructor tell me that?

FRANNY

(into mike)

"Little Drummer" to control! Clear the runways! This is an emergency landing!

INT. WEST MESA AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

At the mike, Buddy makes chicken noises.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Result: Four incredulous looks.

FRANNY

(into mike)

Stick your noises where the sun won't shine! This plane's almost on fire, and I'm not gonna let my passengers die! CLEAR THE RUNWAYS!

Trudy, Roman, and Ernie applaud.

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

Onlookers (as well as a still-filming Delilah Mae) gasp when the still-smoking Stinson heads for a runway, touches down, and...comes to a stop at last.

INT. STINSON 108 - DAY

Franny shuts the plane off and turns to her passengers.

FRANNY
 (unfastens her seat belt)
 RUN!!

Ernie, Trudy, and Roman unbuckle their belts and scurry from the plane. Franny hurries out of there...

EXT. WEST MESA AIRPORT - DAY

...and the foursome sprint to safety as the plane explodes in front of a hushed, stunned crowd.

EXT. LIBERTY CAFE - NIGHT

Lots of cars and trucks cruise Central Avenue on this Independence Day.

INT. LIBERTY CAFE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The jukebox pumps out SWINGIN' MUSIC in this PACKED SPACE awash in (what else?) red, white, and blue.

At a back-to-back-to-back table setup: Roman, Trudy, Shirley, Franny, Elijah, Harriet, Rachel, Amanda, Virginia, and Cliff...all ten in suits, slacks, and neckties (or bow ties).

All ten tablemates chow down.

FRANNY
 Well, anyway, they found out Mr. Pitlock sabotaged the plane.
 (takes a bite)
 And they fired Mr. Kreitling 'cause he didn't wanna let me make an emergency landing.

ROMAN
 What's more, the police found out Mr. Pitlock and Mr. Kreitling issued that death threat.

Several heads nod.

ELIJAH
 What're they gonna do with those two guys?

SHIRLEY
 Well, Mr. Peters...maybe they can move to Hollywood and be stuntmen.

TRUDY
 Or impersonators...impressionists.

HARRIET
Better yet...jailbirds.

Bettie and Kathryn (in their own suits and ties) enter the eatery, and the tri-table occupants gesture them over.

AMANDA
Look at you two! Lookin' gate!

BETTIE
Thanks, Amanda!

Elijah and Harriet shake hands with Bettie.

RACHEL
Have a seat!

As Kathryn and Bettie slide into empty seats at the tri-table setup, Jeannine (with today's "Albuquerque Journal") and Frank jump up from their own table to approach the Evanses.

JEANNINE
Shirley...Franny...

Shirley and a stunned Franny turn around to eye Jeannine.

JEANNINE (CONT'D)
You both did something extraordinary last Saturday at the West Mesa Airport. And I salute you.

Franny points to herself...Shirley joins her in Club Stunned.

JEANNINE (CONT'D)
I vividly remember how a friend of mine from back home in Tulsa joined the WASP...and ended up being one of the thirty-eight WASP killed.

HARRIET
I'm sorry it happened to her.

JEANNINE
And Franny and Shirley, you showed the same kind of grit my friend did...especially when you stood up to the air monitor and landed the plane before it exploded.

Bettie's is a slow nod.

JEANNINE (CONT'D)
 You both make Eugene Field
 Elementary School
 proud...Albuquerque proud.

KATHRYN
 Way to testify, Jeannine!

JEANNINE
 I was completely and totally wrong
 to doubt you...can you two ever
 forgive me?

Ernie, Honey Lou, Leonard, and Roy walk inside the cafe...and
 find a hush over the place.

SHIRLEY
 Of course, Mrs. Earle. Of course.

Shirley stands up; she and a wet-eyed Jeannine embrace.
 Franny comes over to make it a group hug.

FRANNY
 If we can't forgive you, then Harry
 S. Truman isn't this country's
 president.

The teacher and the two students share a laugh.

JEANNINE
 And Trudy...you were absolutely
 right: If little boys can be
 anything they want to be, then
 little girls can be anything they
 want to be, too.

A huge smile fills Trudy's face.

VIRGINIA
 Thanks for saying that!

The three tables erupt in applause.

SAME SCENE - A BIT LATER

Shirley and Franny meet at Frank's and Jeannine's
 table...Marlene approaches Roy, Leonard, Honey Lou, and Ernie
 (all four wait to be seated).

JEANNINE
 Franny and Shirley, it'd be an
 honor if you both would sign my
 "Albuquerque Journal."

Franny and Shirley write their autographs on the "Journal" page where an article headlined "GIRL, 10, FLIES BURNING PLANE - SAVES PARENTS, INSTRUCTOR" appears.

FRANK
 (smiling at Jeannine)
 Now that's how you step back and
 let Mary Shelley write
 "Frankenstein."

While Jeannine laughs, FOUR CUSTOMERS head for the exit.

MARLENE
 (waving at departees)
 Thanks for coming!

Marlene waves back before she eyeballs Leonard, Ernie, Honey Lou, and Roy.

MARLENE (CONT'D)
 We've got you a table for four.
 Glad you're here.

ERNIE
 Thanks so much!

The four new customers watch Marlene clean the table.

ROY
 Y'all hear Mrs. Earle?

HONEY LOU
 Yeah! She used Franny's nickname
 instead of her real name!

LEONARD
 Franny told me she was named after
 Frances Perkins.

Marlene nods as Honey Lou, Leonard, Ernie, and Roy sit down.

SAME SCENE - STILL LATER

Franny and Shirley return to their spots at the three-table setup. All chow down when Cliff bangs a spoon to his glass.

CLIFF
 (rising up with glass)
 Now...anybody got a wish?

SHIRLEY
Wouldn't it be great if the
Albuquerque Four had their own
radio show?

FRANNY
That's a great idea!

Roman's face freezes.

SHIRLEY
(to Roman and Trudy)
Well, Franny and I can't get our
pilot's licenses until we turn
sixteen.

FRANNY
And you don't have to be a certain
age to have your own radio show.

Most in the dining room applaud the wish...and they gaze at
Roman, whose face continues in frozen mode.

TRUDY
Roman, hon...the kids make a whole
lot of sense.

ROMAN
I'll drink to that!

FREEZE FRAME as the cheering customers raise their glasses.

FADE OUT.

THE END