

Chapter XXVII

Picking Up the Pieces

April 23, 1930 – July 28, 1930

As Curly got out cab with his sea bag, he instantly knew something was dreadfully wrong. For starters, it was obvious that she had already had the baby. Her countenance was fallen as she lethargically clung to the pillar. She didn't run to him. As he approached her, there was no squeal of excitement. No bouncing up and down on the balls of her feet. She didn't say a word. She just looked on with a blank stare on her face as he came up the sidewalk. Curly stepped up onto the porch and took Geannie in his arms.

"Oh, Sheffield. I missed you so much." she sobbed into his shoulder.

"What's the matter, Sweetheart?" He asked.

"You didn't get my letter, did you?"

"Apparently not." Curly answered.

"You had best come and sit down." she responded as she led him by the hand to the porch swing.

As Curly sat down beside Geannie, concern filled his expression as he anticipated some very, very bad news.

"We lost the baby." she said softly.

"What!?" he asked in disbelief.

Geannie then proceeded to unfold the sad tale of the last two weeks. As he listened, he became heartsick as the magnitude of their loss sank in.

When Geannie was finished, he sat for a moment in stunned silence before responding. "Oh Geannie, how awful! I'm so sorry. I'm sorry I wasn't here for you. I missed his entire lifetime. How are you holding up?"

"Not very well." she answered. Her state had been made worse by explaining the whole thing to Curly. As he experienced it for the first time, she relived it all over again.

The two of them sat silently on the porch swing. Curly was too stunned to respond. Geannie didn't need him to. She was getting what she needed from him, the comfort of his loving arms.

The silence was broken by the sound of Marie turning into the driveway. No sooner than the car came to a stop, the door flew open. Sandy and Austin sprang from the car and ran calling, "Daddy! Daddy!"

Curly took his arm from around Geannie just in time to catch them as they leaped onto their laps. Turning his attention to his children, Curly said, "Gosh I missed you two."

"We missed you too, Daddy" Sandy answered for both of them. Then Sandy added, "Did Mommy tell you about Charlie Em? That's so sad."

"Yes she did, Honey. It makes me very, very sad."

As Marie came up onto the porch, Curly stood to greet her. She embraced him and said, "Welcome

home, Curly.”

Then she said to Sandy and Austin, “Go tell Grandpa and Grandma Brason that your Daddy is home.”

The three went into the house. Geannie showed Curly the photographs of Charles Emmett while the ever resourceful Marie set about preparing a last minute welcome home dinner. A few minutes later, Sandy and Austin returned with their other grandparents. There was another round of warm embraces. Marie called the Senator at the bank and told him that Curly was home. He promised to wrap up his business and would be home soon. Marie then called Sarah and within a few minutes she and Walt and their kids came over as well.

Curly and Geannie slipped away for a little while with Sarah and Walt to go to the cemetery. Curly still in his uniform got down on one knee at the foot of the grave of the son he had never met and wept openly.

When they returned home, Marie and Ellen were putting the finishing touches on a quickly prepared pancake supper. True to his word, the Senator arrived just in time to sit down and say Grace. The real welcome home dinner would have to wait until the next day when everyone could be there.

The next morning, Geannie was up before the sun. She had failed to go for her run on Wednesday. After her devotional, she put on her bathing suit, flannel pajama bottoms and sweater, put her hair in ponytail and walked over to the park to run. Her running outfit proved to work very well. She actually ran a good distance that morning. She marveled at how it cleared her head. She came home, took a bath, changed into one of her nicer dresses and put on her makeup and fixed her hair, all before Curly woke up. It was amazing at what a difference a day could make. A big part of that difference was having Curly home.

When Curly did get up, he stumbled out into the kitchen. Everyone had already had breakfast and were about their day. He had just sat down to a bowl of Wheaties and had taken his first bite when Geannie came into the kitchen. Before saying good morning, he said, “This milk tastes funny. Its sweet!”

Geannie looked at the jar of milk that he had setting on the table and burst out laughing. “It’s sweet,” she explained, “because of where it came from.”

“Why?” Curly asked, “Where did it come from?”

“Me!” Geannie snickered. “I have been donating to the milk bank at the hospital.”

“Umm. No wonder its so sweet.” Curly said as he took another spoonful. He finished the whole bowl.

During the afternoon, Walt asked Curly and Geannie to come see him at his office. They left the kids with Marie and walked around the corner to the church. Walt wanted to see them in the capacity of their minister. He asked them how they were doing. For Curly, the shock was still so new, that he wasn’t

sure how he was. Geannie told him of all of the convoluted emotions that she was experiencing.

Walt explained it this way. "Have you ever heard the term, 'picking up the pieces'? That is literally what one does during the grieving process.

"Picture in your mind a bookshelf full of books of all sizes. Now, look at those books and on the spine you will see the name of each book. They have names like anger, passion, joy, hate, love, selfishness, and so on. Each of those books represent an emotion. See how they are all neatly organized, each one in its proper place?

"Now something comes along, like the loss of a child. Your bookshelf gets knocked over and the books are scattered all over the floor. You have to pick up the books one by one and put them back in their proper order and as you do you will find yourself dealing with that emotion to one degree or another.

"Take envy, for example. You may not have an envious bone in your body, but as you put that book back on the self, you may find yourself envious of someone. It will take time to get your bookshelf reorganized. It has been my observation that it takes at least a year to begin to have things put back in order for the most part.

"I have watched you for the last couple of weeks, Geannie. You have been on a real roller coaster ride, haven't you? That will continue as you 'pick up the pieces'. Gradually the difference between the highs and lows will even out. But I must warn you, just when you think things have settled down, something will, and I emphasis will, come along and send you into another tailspin.

"You will need to rely on each other and you will need be to be patient with each other. You won't be experiencing the same things at the same time and you won't experience the same emotion to the same degree. So don't get upset if the other doesn't feel the same as you at any given time.

"Does any of this make any sense?" He asked.

Curly and Geannie just nodded their heads.

Walt went on to discuss other matters and offered more counsel. It was not easy for him, as this was his brother and sister-in-law sitting across from him. Walt was very caring, compassionate, and professional during the session. When he was done he concluded with, "We better get over to the Austin's everyone will be gathering soon. It will be a nice evening."

And it was.

The next day it was Geannie's turn to offer comfort. Curly felt awful. He wondered if he should resign from the navy and give up flying. Geannie, remembering the eagle with the clipped wings at the San Diego Zoo, she could not let him do that. She encouraged him to stay with his dream because it made him happy, which made her happy.

During Curly's thirty days in Roanoke, the roller coaster ride continued. Some days Geannie was the

one who held Curly up, other days it has just the opposite. There were days when they were both up. There were days when they were both down. On those days they had their family to support them.

When his thirty days expired, Curly took the train back to Norfolk and rejoined his squadron. All alone to confront his grief, all he could do was fly. He pushed himself and his division harder which made all six pilots better.

The Saratoga sailed from Norfolk at the end of the first full week in June. The only outlet Curly had was Lieutenant Command Raymond Spencer, the Saratoga's chaplain. Curly and Commander Spencer spent many hours talking. Curly found that talking helped him get it out of his system. At the end of each visit, he would thank the chaplain for his help.

About all Commander Spencer did was listen. He found that listening did much more for a person than anything he had to say. He had learned early in his ministry that healing has to come from within.

During one of their conversations Curly wondered about putting in for a transfer. Most pilots were rotated out for a couple years of shore duty to keep them from burning out. After all, he had been with the squadron since earning his wings. He had been in the squadron longer than most everyone else. He reasoned that it would give him time with Geannie and the kids so they could work through their grief together.

About the only suggestion Commander Spencer made was that in his experience, these things take at least a year before a person begins to see their way through. At the end of their visit, Curly felt really good about the idea. "That Commander Spencer sure knows his stuff." Curly thought to himself after talking to him.

At the first opportunity, Curly met with the squadron commander to discuss what was on his mind. He explained the death of his son. They talked about how long he had been in the squadron and his overall career path.

The commander hated to lose Curly, but he felt a transfer was in order to further Curly's career. He agreed to his request and filled out the necessary paper work. In his comments, he wrote "Lieutenant Brason is an outstanding officer and pilot with the potential of one day commanding a squadron of his own. It is my recommendation that two years of administrative duty ashore will give him the needed experience to further his career."

Curly had plenty of flight time while the Saratoga transited Caribbean, passed through the Panama Canal, and sailed to San Diego. Early in the morning of June 20th, as the Saratoga neared North Island she went to flight quarters and sent her squadrons aloft.

Winging his way home in formation with his division, as part of the greater formation of the squadron, he was excited in anticipation of being home and being with Geannie and the kids again. As the

air station came into sight, the eighteen planes began their descent and assumed their landing approach. It was 2-B-7's turn to land. Curly brought her down gently without even the slightest bounce. Cutting the throttle, the aircraft slowed down and he taxied to the parking area.

Once parked, he shut off the engine and dismounted his trusty F3B. Being a Friday, the air group was given the rest of the day and the weekend off. Lugging his sea bag, he walked toward the main hangar. In the public waiting area, he saw Geannie and the kids waiting to greet him.

Seeing Curly off at the train station was difficult for Geannie. The thirty days they had together at home with their family had been wonderful. She had come a long ways during that time. Three days later, Geannie and the kids boarded the train for the four day trip across the country. There was too much time with nothing to do but look out the window at the passing countryside and think. Think about Charles Emmett.

Once back in San Diego, they took a taxi home. The place was just as she had left it four months earlier. She unpacked and put things away. While putting Austin's things away in his room, the thought crossed her mind that he won't be sharing his room after all. At least not right away. So much anticipation, so much disappointment.

Geannie knew that best thing for her to do was to resume her normal routine. She let her piano students know that she was back. The other organizations that she was involved with were glad to have her back. The Navy Women's baseball team even took her on as a relief pitcher part way through the season. She worked out arrangements with Cowboy's wife, Francis to watch their son, Jake and her newborn baby. In return, Francis watched Sandy and Austin while she went for her run on the beach.

She much preferred the beach over the park back home. She didn't bother with her pajama bottoms and ran in her bathing suit. She got to where she was running a mile down the beach and a mile back. At the end of her run, she would take a plunge in the ocean.

While watching Francis' children, she asked her if it would be alright if she nursed her baby. Geannie was still producing a little milk as she had not totally dried up yet. It was actually medicine for her soul. Nursing was one of the things she loved about being a mother. Since she did not get to nurse Charles Emmett, Francis' baby filled her empty arms, if only for a moment. Donating to the milk bank in San Diego was not very convenient, so Geannie eventually let it go altogether.

Geannie looked forward with anticipation for Curly's return. Five days after he she returned, Curly was due to return. Filling her time with here regular routine was also good for Geannie. The low moments were not nearly as low. She found that giving of her time and talents helped her as well.

Then the morning came! Geannie listened intently for sound of approaching aircraft engines. She

was hanging out some laundry to dry when she finally heard them. She gathered up Sandy and Austin and headed for the air station to watch the squadrons come in. Spotting Curly was not as easy since he lost his read scarf in the accident. She didn't actually spot him until she saw 2-B-7 taxiing into the parking area.

Excitement built within her breast as she saw him climb out of his plane and hop to the ground. She bounced on her toes as she watched him tote his sea bag toward the waiting area. She couldn't hold back any longer. "Flyboy!" she shouted as he came closer. She let go of Sandy and Austin's hands and ran to him. She threw herself into his arms, nearly knocking him off balance.

After whirling her around once, he gave her big kiss and planted her back on the ground. He then swooped up both Sandy and Austin, each in one arm and whirled them around. He gave each of them a kiss and set them back on their feet.

"I have the rest of the day off. I think we should do something fun this afternoon. How does a picnic at the beach sound?"

"Yeah!" Sandy and Austin cheered in unison.

Curly slung his sea bag over his shoulder, put one arm around Geannie, and picked up Austin in the other. Geannie couldn't put her arm around Curly very well because of his sea bag, but she did take Sandy by the hand and the four of them walked home linked together.

As they walked, Curly told her about putting in a transfer request for shore duty. He explained how he was due to be rotated out of active flight duty anyway. He told her that it would be a two year administrative assignment somewhere. He concluded with, "That way I'll be around so we can work through things together. By the time I am rotated back in, we should be pretty much healed, if one can ever get completely over it."

"Oh Lieutenant!" She hadn't called him that for a long time, "You'd do that for me?"

"For us. Believe it or not, you're more important to me than anything." Curly answered.

Something stirred in Geannie. It was a feeling she hadn't felt for a longtime. As they walked the rest of the way home, she walked as close to him as she could, with out tripping over each other.

When they got home, Curly unpacked and put his things away. Geannie began putting together the fixings for a picnic. Curly packed it all out to the car while Geannie got the kids in their swimming suits. When Curly and Geannie went into their bedroom to change, Geannie couldn't help but eye Curly up and down, taking it all in.

Unbeknown to Geannie, Curly was was looking at her in the same way. He marveled at how great she looked. Running had paid off as she was in great shape and looked terrific even with more stretch marks than she had before. Neither one said a word about what they were thinking as they put on their bathing suits.

Making sure they had everything, Gennie checked off the list in her head. "Picnic blanket, umbrella, cooler, food, can opener. The only thing we need are some treats and some ice cold Coca-Cola from the store. Oh yeah, and a bottle opener."

It was perfect for a day at the beach. A gentle sea breeze cooled the afternoon sun and the surf was not too rough. As they spread out their picnic, the *Saratoga* dropped anchor just off shore and began lowering her ship's boats.

There is nothing quite like a picnic at the beach. No one seemed to mind a little sand. They sat on the blanket under the umbrella and ate their tuna sandwiches as they watched the boats make the trip from the giant ship to the pier and back again. Once the boats had been hoisted back aboard, the *Sara* weighed anchor and slowly steamed away up the coast.

With lunch over and put away, the little family set about building a sandcastle. All of them worked on it together, even Austin helped. What started out to be just a simple little sandcastle grew and grew. Geannie caught Curly looking at her with hungry eyes while she tried to hide her own appetite for him.

The castle was nearly two feet high and three feet in diameter when the water from the afternoon tide began lapping at its walls. Abandoning to its inevitable fate, they turned their attention to playing in the water.

Geannie had her back to Curly when she bent over to pick up Austin. He found himself staring at the shapely beautiful woman. He realized how much he missed her. Their time in Roanoke was swallowed up in grieving. All of their affection was diverted to comforting one another emotionally. Intimacy had been put on the back burner. It had been a very long time and he wanted her.

He wasn't alone. Geannie was watching him too, in between keeping track of the kids. She playfully splashed water in his face, and a chase was on. She ran up onto the beach where she let him catch her. One of their famous wrestling matches broke out and they rolled around in the sand. As he lay on top of her pinning her to the sand, his body pressed against hers, she would have given herself to him right then if the setting had been right. The thought had to be put on hold as Sandy and Austin piled on top of both of them.

Once the dog pile broke up, Sandy and Austin wandered off looking for sea shells and sand dollars. Curly and Geannie propped themselves up with the arms behind them. "I have a guilty confession to make." Geannie admitted.

"Oh yeah, what's that?" Curly asked.

"Do you recollect the bookshelf analogy that Walt talked about?" she asked.

"Yeah"

"Well, do you know what book I just picked up?"

"Hopefully the same one I did." Curly answered.

“Oh, yeah. And just what one is that?” Geannie asked.

“Lust.” Curly responded. “Not in an illicit way mind you. More of a passionate longing.”

In response to that answer, Geannie threw herself on top of Curly, knocking him to the sand, kissing him passionately. She raised herself up, still hovering over him, “I want you too, Lieutenant.”

Curly responded with a question. “Do you know what I think?” Then he answered, “I think its time for the kids afternoon nap.”

Geannie stood up and extended a hand and pulled Curly up. She began putting away the picnic while Curly helped Sandy and Austin gather up their pile of treasure. Once everything was loaded up, they drove the short distance home. Sandy and Austin were both tuckered out and it wasn't difficult to put them down. Once the kids were asleep, together they put that book back onto their respective bookshelves.

The next couple of weeks were pretty good. From time to to time, one or the other had their moments as they each maintained their regular routines.

Geannie had received a letter from Ramona in which she acknowledged the loss of Charles Emmett. She had written back to her in return but hadn't heard from Ramona since. So less than a week after Curly returned, she was surprised to get a telephone call from Ramona.

“Hi Geannie, its Ramona.” she said.

“Ramona! My goodness. How are you?”

“I'm fine, thank you. I just wanted to call you and let you know that I'm in the States and was wondering if I can come and see you before I go back.”

“Why yes, of course.” Geannie said excitedly. “I'd love to see you. When would you be comin?”

“I could be there on Monday, if that's alright.”

“Yes, that would be wonderful. So did you finally make that trip to visit your mother?”

“Well, yes and no. I wasn't planning on coming for a few months, but then I got word that she had been hit by a car and had died.”

“Oh Ramona, thats terrible. I'm sorry to hear that. How are you holdin up.”

“It was a shock. Now I regret putting off coming to see her. By the time I got here, she had been dead for five days. I had to arrange for her burial and settle her affairs. With that taken care of, there is nothing left for me to do here. I'd really like to see you.”

“By all means. I'd love to see you.”

“Great.” Ramona concluded. “This is costing me, but I'll be arriving at two fifteen on the afternoon of the thirtieth. We can get caught up then, okay.”

“We'll be ready and waitin for you. You'll stay with us of course. See you then.”

“Good bye Geannie. I look forward to seeing you.”

“Bye Ramona.”

When Curly got home, he found Geannie in a particularly chipper mood, as he himself had had one of those bad days. He had been down on himself, again, for missing out on Charles Emmett's entire life and not being there for Geannie.

When he came through the door, after greeting him with a hug and a kiss, she told him that Ramona was coming for a visit.

“Good, I'm glad. Ever since she and Susan moved away, you don't have any real close friends to do things with.”

“Oh I have plenty of other ladies, but you're right, none of them are the good friends that Ramona and Susan are.”

“So when is she coming?”

“On Monday. I was hopin you could set up a cot for her in Sandy's room, like you did for my mother when she was here.”

“Sure. I can do that.”

Geannie went on to tell him about her brief conversation and about how her mother had died.

Over the next few days, Geannie looked forward to Ramona's visit with great anticipation and everything was ready for her arrival on Monday. Sheffield was at the air station when the train arrived, but Geannie and the kids were waiting for her at the train station.

When Ramona stepped off the train onto the platform, there was a tearful and emotional reunion as both were grieving the loss of a loved one. After regaining their composure, Ramona fetched her bags and got in the car for the trip across the bay. When they got home, Ramona was tired from the long, three day train ride, so she wanted to rest for a while.

By the time Curly came home, she was refreshed and was helping Geannie with supper. As he came through the door, Geannie greeted him at the door with her usual hug and kiss. After giving hugs to the kids, Ramona had a hug for him. She held on long and tight. Curly had forgotten how clingy she had become with him after Tom died. The embrace was broken only after he gave her a welcoming kiss on the cheek. It was a kiss that meant more to her than she could tell.

Over supper, Ramona told of getting word of her mother's death, getting the time off, the trip over on the ship, taking care of her mother's affairs, and finally the train ride to San Diego. Her mother had been the only family she had known. Her father had been killed when she was only nine and her baby brother died a few years earlier. There hadn't had any contact with her extended family since they left Oklahoma when she was only six. For all intents and purposes, she now felt like she was now an orphan.

After supper and in to the evening Geannie told Ramona all about Charles Emmett and what they had been through. Since Curly had to report for duty the next morning, he went off to bed and left Geannie and Ramona to visit until quite late in the evening.

Over the next few days, Geannie and Ramona did everything together. One day she attended Geannie's baseball game. Another day they took the kids to the beach. It was while at the beach that Geannie asked Ramona about her love life.

"So whatever became of the man you told me about in your letter? Are you still seeing him?"

"No." Ramona confided. "He was transferred to the Philippines right after that and I haven't heard for him since."

"Oh thats too bad."

"Not really." Ramona replied. "It was all physical and there wasn't really any emotional chemistry between us."

"And by physical," Geannie asked, "I assume you mean sexual."

Ramona lowered her eyes, as not to look her friend in the eye as she simply said, "Yes." Then she continued, "Since he left, I've hooked up with another fella."

"Do you like him?" Geannie quizzed.

"Not really. He's just someone to do stuff with."

"Again you mean makin whoopee?" Geannie asked.

"Pretty much. When it comes right down to it, ts like I told you in that letter, since I can't have a long term, meaningful relationship with a man, I've settled for short term and meaningless."

"You're sellin yourself short, Ramona. These guys are just usin you."

"I know. But do you know what? I'm just using them too."

"Listen to me Ramona. You're on a path to heartbreak and misery. Nothin good will come of any of it. Someday, someone will come along who you can really love and who can love you."

"Yeah, but I can't have the man that I really love."

"Are you still hung up on that married man?"

"Try as I may, I just can't get him out of my mind or my heart, for that matter."

"Thats not goin to get you anywhere either. Just to more heartache."

"Do you know just how Lucky you are, Geannie?"

"Yes I do. I hope someday you can have what I have. Believe me, when he comes along, he won't want you if you stay on the path that you're on."

"I know you're right. I just wish I was as strong as you. I really look up to you, you know. I just wish we weren't so far apart."

“Me too. Since you and Susan left, I really don't have any close friends here. Did I tell you that Curly has put in for a transfer?”

“No, you didn't. Say, wouldn't it be grand if he was sent to Hawaii. You'd love it there.”

“From how you describe it and what Curly has told me about the one time he was there, I'm sure I would. 'Til then, we've got the good old U S Mail.”

“You know Geannie, you are more than the best friend I've ever had, you're like my sister. I love you.”

“And I love you, too.”

At that they, they sealed their love with a hug, vowing to always be close, regardless of the distance between them. Just then Sandy and Austin, who had been playing nearby came running, saying they were hungry. After they left the beach, Ramona treated them to lunch before going home.

Ramona stayed for a few more days, including the Fourth of July. Then the next day on Saturday Geannie, Curly, and the kids saw her off at the Matson Line terminal in San Diego as she boarded the SS Malolo for the trip back to Hawaii. She and Geannie promised to stay in touch. There was a round of hugs before boarding. As was typical with Ramona, the hug she had for Curly was a little tighter and longer than he was comfortable with.

The visit from Ramona had been good for Geannie and had helped her a lot. As for Curly, keeping busy and staying occupied seemed to help. Flying in formation at fifteen thousand feet, he couldn't afford to let his emotions distract him. He hoped that the transfer would soon come through. Then one day in early July just after Ramona left, it did.

He excitedly rushed home that evening. Bursting through the door he called, “Geannie! Geannie! It came, it came.”

Geannie stopped what she was doing and came out into the front room. “What is it? Tell me, Lieutenant.”

“You'll never guess.” Curly challenged.

“Hawaii would be terrific.” Geannie answered. “Ramona says it's an absolute paradise over there.”

“That would be very nice, indeed.” he agreed. “Would you settle for Washington, D.C.?”

“Washin'ton! Oh Curly, that's just five hours from home! That's perfect!” she answered bouncing up and down on her toes. “When do you have to report?” Geannie asked excitedly.

“I have to be there on the 28th. I still have next week to wrap up things here and they're giving me two weeks to get moved and settled.

“It's a two year assignment with the Bureau of Aeronautics. I won't know specifically what I'll be

doing until I get there. I do know that I do have to report to the Anacostia Naval Air Station there twice a month for four hours of flight time to keep my pilot qualifications valid.”

Her mind racing, Geannie said, “There is so much to do all of a sudden. We have to find a place to live, pack everything up, and move. Fortunately we have next week to figure it out. I can't wait to call Susan. Do you think it is too late? Its nine o'clock there.”

Geannie dialed to operator and asked to be patched through to the McGowan's in Arlington, Virginia. Freddy is the one who actually picked up on the other end. Susan wasn't available so she talked to him while Curly cleaned up and changed his clothes.

Freddy told her that he had seen Curly's name posted that day to work in a different area than his. He told her that Curly would actually be replacing someone who lived just around the corner in their neighborhood and their house would be available. He explained that they don't provide officers housing and everyone had to find their own, but the Navy did provide a housing allowance. He said that there were a lot of navy families who rented homes in the neighborhood because of the nearby Army and Navy Country Club. He explained that where they lived was only four miles from the Navy Building and took about fifteen minutes to get to work. In fact, he carpooled with some other officers, including the one Curly was replacing. Geannie asked about the house. Freddy said that it was a nice home and had been well taken care of. It was slightly larger than their three bedroom duplex in Coronado. She asked him to see if he could hold it for them.

Susan was finally free and came to the telephone. Both good friends were thrilled at being reunited. They made tentative plans for all of the things they could do together. Before hanging up, she asked Geannie how she was getting along and said that she thought of her often.

Geannie told her that she was doing better, even though she still had her moments.

After hanging up, Geannie told Curly what Freddy had told her and that she had asked him to see if he could hold the house for them.

By the time supper was over it was too late to call family in Roanoke. That would have to wait until the next day. During the evening, they talked about the move. “Should we pack everything in the car and trailer and drive across county, or go by train?” Geannie wondered.

As they discussed it Curly reasoned, “The train had always worked so well with past moves. Besides, the Navy will pay for it. This way we can bring the piano and the washing machine. We could take the train as far as Roanoke, leave the kids and our belongings there and go on to Washington to figure things out, and then make the move.”

During the next week, Curly had to wrap things up with the squadron. Geannie took care of the household matters. She arranged to have the telephone and other services terminated. She told all of the

groups that she was involved with that she would be leaving and helped her piano students make arrangements for new teachers. She also sent off a quick letter to Ramona with the news.

Geannie began packing things to get ready for the move and had most things ready. Some last minute items and their luggage for the trip remained. The night before they were to leave, the men in his division threw a going away party for them at the playground area. Cowboy was taking over as section leader. The other section leader was the new division officer.

On the morning they were to leave, a truck pulled up outside. The driver and his crew began loading everything up. Soon the apartment was empty, except for what it had been furnished with. With their luggage loaded into the car, they looked over what had been their home for the last six and a half years as they crossed the ferry one last time on their way to the train depot.

“Who knows,” Curly commented. “Maybe someday we will be back here again.”

They checked in at the depot, got their tickets, watched as their car was loaded with the rest of their belongings into a box car. Their luggage was checked and taken to their four bed berth compartment. Soon the conductor made the first boarding call. They boarded the train, took their seats and had their tickets punched.

The steam hissing from the locomotive indicated they were almost ready to depart. The blast of the whistle was followed by a slow chug. Each chug was more powerful as the train began moving. Four days later, they were in Roanoke. The railroad car with the belongings was moved onto a side track to await the final trip to Arlington.

It had only been a little over a month since they had been home. What a difference a month makes. With a new adventure at foot, they were upbeat and positive, opposed to discouraged and downcast.

The next day Curly and Geannie left the kids with Marie and drove to Arlington, where they meet up with Freddy and Susan. They liked the house and made arrangements to move in as soon as it was available. Freddy and Susan showed them around the area a little that evening. That night, they stayed with Freddy and Susan.

The next morning, Curly found the Navy Building located at 18th and Constitution Avenue and he checked in with his new commanding officer, Commander Richard Redding, to introduce himself. He was shown where his office was. His first assignment hadn't been finalized yet so he couldn't tell him what he would be doing.

That afternoon, Curly and Geannie did a little exploring around Washington, D.C. They wondered if they would be able to see everything there was to see in the two years they knew that they would be there. That evening, they and Freddy and Susan went out to dinner at a very nice place that the McGowans frequented often. After spending the night once again, Curly and Geannie drove back to Roanoke the next

day.

They had a week before they could move in so they spent the time visiting with family. Senator Austin was out on the campaign trail so they didn't see much of him. When he did come home he had a proposal for Geannie. "I want to open a campaign office in Arlington and hire you to manage it. I'm not as well known in Northern Virginia and I want to establish my presence up there. I know you're pretty good at that kind of stuff. After all you were heavily involved in the women's suffrage movement ten years ago while you were in college."

"I had planned on teachin piano lessons and getting involved in some of the organizations that I had been in back in San Diego, but I reckon that could wait until you're elected to the Senate. That would sure keep me busy. Do I get paid for it or is this one of those family obligations?"

"A little of both. It kind of depends on the campaign contributions that come in from up there, I suppose."

"Oh, I see how this works. That gives me incentive to work harder. Do you really think folks will take a woman serious when askin for contributions?"

"Awe, heck. Just turn on that Austin charm and flash that smile of yours and you'll have them in the palm of your hands. You've got enough of your old man in you that this sort of thing comes natural to you. Besides you have a much prettier face."

"I reckon I'm agreeable to the notion, provided I can find someone to watch the kids. My friend Susan McGowan comes to mind. Do you remember her from the funeral?"

"Oh, yes. A lovely woman. They are Republicans, aren't they?"

"I don't know, Daddy. Let me give her a call and talk to her before I give you my final answer."

She talked it over with Curly and that evening she called Susan and explained the situation. She was more than willing to help. After all, the job only lasted until the first Tuesday in November. After hanging up she found her father setting in his favorite chair, next to the radio listening to a news broadcast. She plopped herself down on his lap. "I'll take the job, Daddy." she announced.

A lot of their time was spent just relaxing, which included and overnighter at the cabin with the Walt and Sarah and their kids.

In all, both Curly and Geannie were doing pretty well. They were caught up in the excitement of the move and a new adventure. Walt was concerned for them that with the move they would find themselves in unfamiliar surroundings and routines. He was glad that they both had something to throw themselves into. At least they would be close to home and not clear across the country.

On Sunday, they attended services at the Greene Memorial United Methodist Church with Pastor Walt Brason officiating. That evening, Geannie's parents, Curly's parents, Walt and Sarah and their kids,

and Curly, Geannie, Sandy, and Austin all shared one of Marie's incredible dinners of southern fried chicken. For a being a damn Yankee, she sure had perfected the art of southern cooking.

Monday morning was the day of the move. They packed their luggage into the car and drove down to the depot where it was loaded into the box car with the rest of their belongings. They boarded the train and headed northeast to Arlington.

When they arrived at the depot in Arlington, a moving van was waiting to take their belongings to their new home located at 929 20th Street South in Arlington, Virginia. The 944 square foot house was built in 1924 and was owned by an individual who was out of the country on a diplomatic assignment. Rather than sell the house, he rented it out so it would be available when they returned, but that wouldn't be for the foreseeable future, which meant that Curly and Geannie could live there for the duration of his assignment.

The house, which had three bedrooms, one bathroom, a kitchen and living room, was rather cramped but was enough for two small children. It wasn't furnished, as their apartment in San Diego had been, so they had to scrounge around to come up with the basics so it took a few days to get moved in and settled. The house had a nice front porch with a gable over it and was on a just over a tenth of an acre lot with a small yard.

The rest of the week was spent exploring to learn their way around. They did find the Calvary Methodist Church, which was six blocks away, and planned on attending on Sunday. On Saturday evening, Freddy and Susan threw a welcome to the neighborhood party for the Brasons.

On Monday morning, Freddy and his car pool stopped by to pick Curly up on their way to work. The Navy Building was just under five miles away and the route took them across the 14th Street Bridge, behind the White House and passed the Washington Monument. He reported for duty and after some briefings and orientation, he was given his assignment. He was given a staff of two petty officers and four seamen which he organized into two teams. Their assignment was to inventory the Bureau of Aeronautics files and archive certain records based on the criteria that Commander Redding had given him. The project was expected to take six to nine months.

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