

Chapter IV

Choices

March 12, 1946 – April 8, 1946

During the first part of the second week in March, Sheffield received a telephone call from Joseph Weinstein, the personnel director for American Airlines in New York City, inviting him to come to New York on Friday for an interview. The prospect excited him and he couldn't wait get home and tell Ramona.

Sheffield got home only a few minutes after she did. She suspected something was up the minute that he walked through the door. "Guess what?" he beamed.

"You love me?" she answered.

"No."

"You don't love me?" she frowned.

"Of course, you know that I love you."

"Then tell me."

"Alright. I love you. There how does that sound?"

"I'm not convinced. Tell me again."

He took her in his arms, looked deep into eyes, and said, "I love you more than all of the airplanes in the Navy." And then his gave her a long kiss.

"Wow, you do love me, don't you. So whats the good news?"

"I got a call from American Airlines today. They want me to go to New York on Friday for an interview."

"Really! That is good news."

"I'll need to take the day off. I'll fly out of Washington at seven thirty, my interview is at eleven, and I'll be home by seven that evening."

"Any idea what they have in mind?"

"I hope it has something to do with flying for them."

That was all Sheffield could talk about all through supper and the rest of the evening; and the rest of the week as well.

On Friday morning he got up early and got ready for his trip. "Should I wear my uniform or my suit?" he asked.

Ramona answered, "Wear your uniform. Its pretty hard to say no to an admiral."

"All right, my uniform it is."

After an early breakfast, Sheffield left the house and drove to the Washington National Airport where he parked his car and went into the terminal. He approached one of the American Airlines ticket windows and announced, "I'm Sheffield Brason. Do you have a ticket for me to New York City."

“Yes sir Admiral Brason.” the young man said. “We were expecting you. One moment please.” The young man stepped away and pulled the ticket from the drawer behind the ticket counter. He promptly returned and handed him the ticket. “Do you have anything to check, sir?”

“No, thank you. I'm traveling light to day.”

“Alright then sir. Go down the hall to your right and you'll find concourse A. Your flight is Flight One Two Seven which will be leaving from gate sixteen. Enjoy your flight.”

“Thank you. I will.”

Sheffield left the ticket window and found his way to the gate. There was time to spare so he picked up a discarded copy of the Washington Post to occupy his time. He was reading an article about an announcement by the Prime Minister of Great Britain that their intention was to grant India their independence. He finished the article as people began to gather around. An airline employee was milling around behind the counter.

He thumbed through the rest of the newspaper in anticipation of the call to board the flight. Before long the announcement to board Flight One Two Seven came over the speaker. Sheffield laid down the paper for someone else to look at and got in line. A moment later the door to the tarmac opened and passengers began filing past the gate agent and outside into the crisp March morning air.

As Sheffield handed the agent his ticket, the man mechanically took it, tore off the stub, said “Thank you for flying American.” and handed the ticket back to him without even looking at him. Outside the Douglas DC-3 sat on the tarmac with a portable staircase in place against the hatch at the rear of the plane.

As he walked toward it he could see the DC-4 parked next to it getting ready for a transcontinental flight to San Francisco. He had flown on the Navy version of both aircraft before. The smaller and older DC-3 was a good plane for short duration flights like this one. He wondered how they were to fly as he ascended the stairs.

Once inside the cabin, he was directed to his seat by a stewardess. He had an aisle seat next to an older woman who seemed extremely nervous. “Is this your first time to fly?” He asked.

“Yes it is and I'm scared to death.” she said.

“Oh there is nothing to worry about. I've been a pilot for years and there is nothing quite like it.” Sheffield tried to put the woman to ease as the call to fasten their seat belts was announced. He just about had her calmed down until the plane began moving. She tensed up and held on tight to the armrests. When the plane left the ground she held her breath, afraid to turn her head and look out the window.

Eventually she eased up and began to relax. Once she got up the courage to look out the window, she was fascinated by the view that she had. Sheffield talked to her some more and found out that she was flying to New York to attend the wedding of her grandson.

After the plane had leveled off at cruising altitude, Sheffield asked the stewardess if it might be possible to see the cockpit and talk to the captain. He explained that he himself had been a naval aviator.

She said, "I'll see what I can do." as she moved on up the aisle about her duties. A few minutes later, he saw her enter the cabin. When she emerged, she made a beeline straight for him and said, "The captain would like you to come to the cockpit, sir."

Sheffield got up out of his seat and followed the stewardess to the flight cabin. As he entered, the pilot, Captain Rosco Brothers instinctively saluted. "When she said that you were a naval aviator, I had no idea that you were an admiral, sir."

He turned to his co-pilot and said, "Hey, Franky. Why don't you take a break and let the Admiral have your seat for a minute."

"Yeah, I could use a break right a bout now." the co-pilot said as he removed his headset and got out of his seat, motioning for Sheffield to sit down.

He rested his cane against the cabin wall and sat down behind the controls. He looked them over and began naming them off.

"You know your instruments sir. What did you fly?"

"I was a fighter pilot before the war. Whats your background?"

Captain Brothers explained that he had been a Lieutenant in the Navy and flew PBJs, the Navy's version of the B-25, on patrol missions in the South Pacific.

"Whats the main difference between flying something like this and a single engine aircraft?" Sheffield wanted to know.

"Mainly sir, it has two engines and is bigger. The biggest difference between operating a multi-engine airplane and a single-engine airplane is the potential problem when an engine fails. When that happens, you've got two problems, performance and control. For starters, you'll lose fifty percent of power, which reduces climb performance by eighty to ninety percent, sometimes more.

"The other problem is that the remaining thrust is asymmetrical. You really have to work hard to compensate in order to stay on course without veering off to the side. Probably the biggest advantage is the redundancy built into a multi-engine aircraft."

"I see what you mean." Sheffield responded. "I'll bet you have to pay attention to your wingspan clearance."

"After while, you get used to it."

After talking for a while, Sheffield thanked him for the tour and got up to let the co-pilot have his seat back. When he returned to his seat, he thought to himself, "I could fly one of these." The thought made him look forward to his interview with eagerness.

Soon the plane began making its descent toward the New York Municipal Airport located on the waterfront at the north end of Queens. The city he had spent a week in only five months earlier looked enormous from the air.

Once again the woman sitting next to her became tense as the plane descended rapidly. She nearly went into hysteria when the wheels touched the ground and bounced once. She braced herself against the back of the seat ahead of her as the aircraft slowed down. She looked at Sheffield and said, "I'm taking the train back."

Sheffield stood up and stepped out into the aisle and took a step backwards to allow his traveling companion to go ahead of him. She couldn't get off the plane fast enough. The stewardess was standing at the open hatch bidding farewell to the passengers as they disembarked the aircraft. "Be sure to fly with us again." She said.

"I've enjoyed it so much, I think I'll do it again this afternoon." he said as he stepped through the hatch onto the aircraft staircase. He descended the stairs and walked toward the terminal building.

No sooner than he stepped inside, he was approached by an attractive younger woman who said, "Admiral Brason, I presume."

"That's right."

"Hi." she said extending her hand. "I'm Rachel Riviera. I'm Mr. Weinstein's assistant and this is Newton, my driver." she said, introducing the young man with her. "We have a car waiting to take you back to headquarters with us. Right this way."

Rachel was all business. She wore a conservative navy blue business suit with a skirt that came down midway between her knees and her ankles. Her blazer was buttoned up over a white ruffled blouse. She wore a pair of black rimmed glasses that looked more suited for a man and her black hair was cut short, almost like a man's and the creamy complexion of her face was devoid of makeup. Rachel led the way with brisk pace in her flat heeled shoes.

Sheffield was surprised to find that the car waiting for him was a limousine. Newton opened the back door for them and Rachel let Sheffield get in first. He took the back seat and Rachel got in behind him and sat in the rear facing seat across from him.

"Have to be in New York before, Admiral Brason?" she said, trying to make conversation.

"Yes. Last October for Navy Day in fact." Sheffield responded.

"Yes, I know she said. I read all about you in the Life Magazine." She said holding up both copies that sat on the seat beside her. She then began rattling off statistics and facts about him, many of them that had not been published in the articles.

"It seems that you have been checking up on me Missus. Riviera."

"That's Miss." she corrected. Yes, Mr. Weinstein had me research your background in preparation for his his meeting with you. He is very anxious to meet with you."

During the ride, Sheffield attempted to engage her in conversation about herself to take the focus off of him. He learned that she she had been born and raised in New York City. He estimated her to be about thirty. She told him that she had graduated with a bachelors degree in personnel management. Then she added almost sarcastically, "It's a man's world. Do you realize how hard it is for a woman to compete and get ahead in a man's world?"

"No, I don't suppose I do."

"That's just it. No one does."

They rode the rest of the way in silence. Fortunately it wasn't much farther until the limousine pulled to a stop in front of American Airlines' corporate offices. Newton got out and opened the door for his passengers. Being a gentleman, Sheffield hesitated to allow Miss Riviera to get out first but she insisted that he go first. Once standing on the sidewalk he waited for her to get out and followed her inside. She took him to a lounge area and directed that he wait there for Mr. Weinstein.

He rummaged through the magazines on the coffee table looking for something to look at while he waited. Among them was the edition of Life Magazine with the article about him in it. He picked up a recent copy of Newsweek.

After about twenty minutes, Miss Riviera came out and told him, "Mr. Weinstein will see you now."

He put down the magazine and got up and followed her into the adjacent suite of offices and she ushered him into Mr. Weinstein's office.

Mr. Weinstein got up and met him at the door with his hand extended. Shaking Sheffield's hand he said, "It's a pleasure to finally meet you Admiral Brason."

"Please, call me Sheffield."

"Alright then Sheffield, call me Joe. Have a seat." He said gesturing to one of two facing wingback chairs in front of his desk. Joe sat in the other.

"Thank you for seeing me, Joe. I've been looking forward to this all week."

"It's my pleasure Sheffield. So you are looking at retiring at the end of June. I think I can find a place for you. Tell me about yourself."

"It sounds like Miss Riviera already has."

"Yeah, Rachel did her homework alright, but I want to hear it from you."

Sheffield spent a few minutes talking about his background and his Naval career. He focused a lot on his flight experience.

Joe went one to ask him several questions that focused on his time as Admiral Halsey's air officer,

Captain of the Reprisal, and as a task force commander. Sheffield answered his questions, wondering what he was looking for.

After getting the information he wanted, Joe asked, "So Sheffield what is you would like to at American Airlines?"

"All I've ever wanted to do was fly. Thats why I joined the Navy. I haven't flown much for the last few years and I want to get behind the controls of a plane again. I think I have wealth of experience to offer."

"Indeed you do, Sheffield, but I'm sorry to say it won't be flying for us."

His remark caught Sheffield completely off guard. "Then why did you ask me here?"

"Its like you said, You have a wealth of experience to offer. We can't offer you a job flying and here's why. First, our pilot qualifications mirror those of the military. When your active flight status was revoked because of your injury, it disqualified you from flying for us as well. Besides, your experience is with single-engine aircraft. It doesn't make sense for us to train you in multi-engined planes when we can pick up younger men with recent experience in bombers and patrol planes. They can walk right in a begin flying.

"I know that wasn't what you wanted to hear. But you have something they don't have. You have the operations and leadership skills that we need. I can place you in any number of positions right here in our corporate office or as the operations manager at any of the airports where we fly. When it gets closer to your retirement, depending on what openings we have, I'm confident that I can offer you any number of jobs. What do you say?"

"I hadn't thought about something like that, but It sounds alright. I'm sure I could fit into something like what you have described."

"Let me buy your lunch and then let me take you around and show you some of the things I have in mind for you."

Joe took Sheffield to the cafeteria and then around to a number of offices where various functions of the airline's business were explained to him by those performing them. He then accompanied Sheffield back to the airport for a tour of American's airport operations center there. At the conclusion, Sheffield asked if there was a chance that something like that would open up in Roanoke. Joe said that it might be possible if the right circumstances fell into place; perhaps by moving some people around. Finally it was time for the return flight to Washington. Joe saw him off and assured him that he would stay in touch and see what options were available when the time came.

Sheffield boarded the plane for the return trip to find it to be the same plane with the same crew that he had come in. All way home he contemplated the things he had learned during the course of the day. It was about seven when he got home.

Ramona was waiting for him. "How did it go?"

“Not quite like I expected.” He said.

“Tell me about it over supper. I've got it ready for you.”

“Thanks, I'm starved.” They sat down at the table and Sheffield said Grace.

“So, what happened?”

“I can't fly for them like I was wanting to do, but they definitely want me. Only in an operations role of some kind either in New York or at airport somewhere.”

“New York was an exciting place to visit but I'm not sure I'd want to live there.”

“That's how I feel.” Sheffield agreed. “There might be a chance that they could make a place for me in Roanoke.”

“That would be great if they could arrange that. How do you feel about not flying?”

“I'm disappointed. If they're gong to put me in job like they were describing, I might as well stay in the Navy.”

“But this would give you a chance at whole new career. What does it pay?”

“A lot more than what I can make in the Navy. But that's not whats important to me. I think I could enjoy working for them. But it might mean that we were premature in announcing to the family that we were moving back to Roanoke.”

“We have time to see what might come of it. Perhaps there will be some other options come along for you. We still have a while before we need to decide our next move.”

“What about you, Ramona?”

“Well Babe, I'd be happy wherever you are. I'm sure I can always find something to keep me busy anywhere we might find ourselves.”

Sheffield agreed, and decided to take Ramona's advice and explore what other options might be appealing to him. Since it was clear that he wouldn't be flying professionally, he decided to apply for a private pilots license. It didn't have as many restrictions.

Sheffield returned to work the following Monday. In the back of his mind he thought about what he had learned. He could honestly see himself in any of the positions that were explained to him. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad. They were going home to Roanoke for Emmaline's wedding on the 6th of April. He realized that he would have to tell everyone that they might not be moving to Roanoke after all.

For the next couple of weeks, Sheffield thought long and hard about the possibilities that were open to him and wondered what else there might be. For years he had considered flying for the airlines but hadn't considered anything else. He realized that he should have known that his injury might prohibit him from flying professionally.

So he did the next best thing and applied for a private pilots license. Not only did he have all of the required experience, but he had been a flight instructor for three years. All he had to do was to produce the results of his latest physical and take a written exam. In conclusion, he was told that his application would be submitted for review and that he should have his license in approximately four weeks.

In the meantime, Sheffield pondered what else he might want to do with himself only to draw a blank. Then on April Fools day, he had another alternative presented to him. One that he had mentioned in passing and promptly dismissed.

That day he had a visitor come into his office, someone he would never have expected. He was at his desk working on piecing together a segment of his report. The door opened and in walked Admiral Jonas H. Ingram, the Commander in Chief of the Atlantic Fleet. Sheffield jumped up and came to attention and saluted the admiral with two more stars than what he had.

“At ease, Sheffield.” Admiral Ingram said.

“Please Admiral, have a seat. What brings you to the Night Air Group Project Office?”

“You Sheffield. I was here in Washington to meet with Admiral Nimitz about a matter going on in the Mediterranean. I have come to ask a favor of you.”

“Of course.”

“I understand that you are coming up for retirement at the end of May. Is that right?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Would you consider postponing it for a few months? Keep in mind, this is a request, not an order.”

“What do you have in mind?”

“Are you aware of the Civil War in Greece?”

“I know that there has been unrest there ever since they were liberated from the Nazis. What's going on?”

“Fighting broke out yesterday. Communist backed rebels supported by Yugoslavia attacked a police station and today tensions are at an all time level. The President wants to keep an eye on things but not get involved. The Brits are already committed.

Admiral Nimitz has been asked to send a carrier task force to the region. As you know, the Reprisal back in Norfolk after completing her overhaul and will be ready to sail in three weeks. Air Group Eighty Six is ready to go with her, complete with a squadron of F8F Bearcats and a squadron of dash four Corsairs, along with a squadron of Helldivers and a squadron of Avengers.”

“What does all of this have to do with me, sir?”

“We'd like you to command the task force.”

“Why me sir? There are a lot of others with task force command experience. Couldn't one of them

handle it?”

“They could, but like you they are all presently tied up in other assignments. Besides, you're the only one with experience operating a carrier in the Mediterranean.”

“How long do you anticipate I'd be there?”

“Until after the first of August when the FDR is to arrive in the area on a scheduled deployment. She just concluded her shake down cruise and won't be ready to sail before then. The Tarawa is on her shakedown cruise. The Midway is tied up in the North Atlantic, and the Randolph is scheduled for cadet training cruise in the Caribbean. All of the other carriers on the east coast are in the process of being deactivated, even some of the newer ones. That leaves the Reprisal.

“I know first hand that you're up to the job. What do you say? Will you think about it? Remember, this isn't an order.”

“When would you need a decision?”

“How about a week from today, next Monday the eighth?”

“Alright, Admiral. I'll think about it. In the meantime why don't you be thinking of an alternative for someone else to send?”

“That's fair. I know I caught you cold. I'm sure you may have some things in the works for after you retire.”

“As a matter of fact I do.”

“All I can ask Sheffield is to consider it along with your other plans. Let me know next Monday. I'll expect your call with your decision.”

Admiral Ingram got up from his chair, Sheffield stood up as well. Admiral Ingram extended his hand and the two men shook hands and exchanged salutes. Admiral Ingram left the the office, leaving Sheffield with something else to think about.

After Admiral Ingram left, Sheffield sat there wondering about this new twist. He had already thought about staying in the Navy since flying for the airlines was not an option. He couldn't help but wonder if this was some sort of a sign.

He went to talk to his boss, Admiral Sallada. Admiral Ingram had approached him about Sheffield's availability first. He gave his consent to the request. He and Sheffield discussed status of the project, which was actually a few days ahead of schedule at that point. Sheffield's concern was that it wouldn't get done if he took the assignment. He felt that it was important enough to preserve the lessons learned during the war for some future benefit, so they wouldn't have to be learned all over again. Admiral Sallada's only answer was to have Lieutenant Gover and his assistants finish it, perhaps someone could be brought in to take his place. His final word was, “Its your call. Whatever you decide to do and we'll go from there.”

Ramona could tell instantly that Sheffield had something pretty serious on his mind when she got home and found him staring blankly out the front room window. "Hi Babe, is something the matter?"

Sheffield was so deep in thought that he didn't hear her come in. "Oh, hi sweetheart." and gave her a kiss. "I had a visit from Admiral Ingram today. He asked me to consider postponing my retirement and take a task force built around the Reprisal to the Mediterranean."

"What did you tell him?"

"He gave me a week to think about it. I told him to be thinking of someone else in the meantime. The problem is I feel duty bound to say yes."

"Is this some kind of April fools joke?"

"I wish it was. Not only do I have to wrestle with taking a job with American, now I have this to think about."

"How long would you be gone?"

"Until sometime around the middle of August."

"That would rule out something I thought of today."

"Oh yeah, what's that."

"I thought that it would be great to take a couple of weeks during the first of June before we go on to whatever and spend it at my beach house. It will have been a year since we were last there."

"That's a great idea. We could celebrate your birthday there."

"Whatever you decide. I'll stand by you."

"That's what everyone keeps telling me. It would have been a lot easier if it were a direct order."

"At least you have some time to think about it. Perhaps getting away this weekend will give you a chance to clear your mind."

"Yeah maybe you're right. Say why don't we just go out for dinner tonight?" Sheffield suggested.

"I like that idea. Where do you want to go?"

"You decide. I've got enough decisions to make as it is."

All the rest of the week, Sheffield had a lot on his mind. He tried to put it aside so he could concentrate on his work, but the things he had to choose from were whirling around in the back of his mind. When he left work Friday at noon, he still had not decided what to do. He got home and picked up the mail and was pleasantly surprised to find that his private pilots license had arrived. A few minutes later Ramona got home as well. They changed their clothes and packed for the weekend trip to Roanoke. As usual, they swung by Ruth Ann's apartment and picked her up. Before getting on the road, they stopped off for lunch.

Ruth Ann was excited because she had just received a letter from Joseph saying that he would be coming home for good in July. Sheffield and Ramona were excited for her. Sheffield commented, "Now maybe the two of you can finally get married."

Ruth Ann settled back in her seat and read or watched the countryside go by as her aunt and uncle were engrossed in a conversation about what he should do. Finally Ramona said, "Just try to put it out of your mind and stop obsessing over it. It will come to you much easier if you have a clear head."

"You're right, sweetheart. You're absolutely right. So is there anything special you want to do in Hawaii this time that we haven't done before?"

"Now you're talking, Babe." For the rest of the drive they planned out their potential vacation. It was just after dark when they arrived in Roanoke. After dropping Ruth Ann off at her parents' home, they went to his parents' home where his mother had supper waiting for them.

The next day was busy with the final wedding preparations. During the morning, Sheffield and Ramona tagged along for the wedding rehearsal over at the church, but just sat back and watched. After the dry run, they also attended the luncheon.

After the meal, Bill Casper approached Sheffield. "Say Sheffield. I understand that you'll be resigning your commission in the Navy the end of next month. Do you have any plans in works."

"Yeah, Bill. I'm working on a couple of options."

"Walt says that you and Ramona are planning on moving back to Roanoke. Is that true?"

"I'm not sure any more. I might have been premature in saying that. We're not sure where we'll end up now."

"Well then," Bill said, "let me give you something else to think about."

"I don't know. I'm having a hard time deciding between what I have going now. What do you have in mind?"

"Do you remember a while back when I ran for the school board?"

"Yeah I remember."

"Well I managed to get myself elected. If I'd known of the headaches I was bringing on myself, I might not have been so anxious to jump into it. Anyway, we need a new wrestling coach at Jefferson High School. Would you be interested?"

"Gosh, Bill. I don't know."

"Just hear me out. You were a damn good wrestler in high school. I could never beat you. I'll never forget that kid that you flattened after he spread an unflattering rumor about Geannie. Anyway, you went on to be a second place finisher in your NCAA region. We need someone with that kind of background."

"But that was a long time ago. I bet you could pin me now, with this bum leg of mine."

"You won't need to wrestle anyone, just coach the kids. You have lot of experience in encouraging others on to do a great job, this would be no different."

"Its called giving orders, Bill. You don't order high school kids around, you have to get them to want to."

"See, you know what it takes. What about the pep talks you used to give to inspire your men before going into battle. That's what these kids need. They'd really look up to you. Your a real hero around here. Oh, before I go any farther there is something else. You'd be teaching Government on the side. Two maybe three classes."

"I knew their was catch. I'm not a teacher."

"Weren't you a flight instructor for about three years? If that isn't teaching, I don't know what is. I also have to tell you that it won't pay what your probably making now."

"The pay isn't important."

"Then you'll take it?"

"Now wait a minute Bill. I didn't say that."

"Will you at least think about it?"

"Yea sure Bill. I'll think about it."

"I don't need an answer yet, we have until the end of the school year before the position will be made public. If you were to decide to apply, I can pretty much guarantee that you'd get the job. I see Marge over there trying to get my attention. I'd better go see what she wants. Think about it and we'll talk later in the spring, alright."

"Alright Bill. I'll talk to you later."

During the conversation, Ramona was busy helping Sarah with something or an other. When she finished up, she rejoined Sheffield. "What were you and Bill talking about? It looked pretty intense."

"He asked me to consider being a high school wrestling coach."

"Really? What did you tell him?"

"I told him that I'd think about it to get him off my back."

"Will you think about it?"

"No. Don't be ridiculous. Can you see me as coach."

"I thought that what you've been all of these years."

"Don't you start on me too. I've got more important options to think about without that too."

"Suit yourself, Babe. Its you decision. I'll go along with whatever you decide. Oh look, Sarah needs me again. I'd better go see what she needs."

About then Sheffield saw that Walt had just finished a conversation with Emmaline and motioned him

over. As Walt approached he asked, "Do you have time to talk?"

"Sure little brother. Let's go to my office where we won't be interrupted."

They walked together to Walt's office and went in and shut the door.

As they sat down, Sheffield asked, "So what have you decided to do Walt? The last time we were here you were talking about going full time into your counseling practice."

"My clientèle has really picked up in the last few months. It's taking up most of my time lately. I've decided to go for it. I'm gradually turning more and more things over to my assistant. He'll be taking over by the end of May. My last sermon will be on the twenty sixth."

"Have you found a place to live yet?"

"Actually we've made an offer on a home on the west side of town. It should close in a two or three weeks and then we can move in."

"It sounds like you have things figured out."

"It's all fallen into place nicely. What about you Sheffield?"

"It's not turning out like I had hoped. It turns out that I can't fly for the airlines after all. I'm afraid we were premature to tell everyone that we'll be moving back here. The truth is, I don't know where we'll end up." Sheffield went on to tell him about his possibilities with American Airlines and being asked to postpone his retirement by a few months and go to sea again. He finished with, "And to top it all off, Bill Casper just asked me if I'd be interested in being the wrestling coach at Jefferson High. I just don't know which way to go."

"Maybe it's not about what you want. Perhaps there is someplace where God can use you the most. Sometimes those are the ones that you least expect or had never even considered. I'll tell you this. It makes it a lot easier when you turn it over to someone who knows you a lot better than you know yourself. Not only that, He sees the big picture."

"You know that all sounds good, but it's hard to do. How will I know what when I get my answer?"

"Oh, you'll know. If you go about with complete trust and leave what you want out of it. Do you think it was easy for me to leave the comfort and security of all I've ever known and step out into the unknown. But I can tell you, I've made the right move. I don't know why, perhaps one day it will come clear to me. The same will be true for you."

"Thanks Walt. Now I really have something to think about."

"I remember telling you once before that you think too much and that you need to follow your heart. Do you remember?"

"Yeah, I remember."

"And what did it get you?"

"It got me Ramona."

"See, it worked for you once. Why won't it work again?"

"I suppose it will."

"You bet it will. Let me know how it goes. I'd better get back out there in case someone is looking for me."

"Thanks Walt." Sheffield said as they got up to leave the office.

Sure enough, someone required Walt's attention. Sheffield saw that Ramona was busy so he stepped outside and went for a walk. Instead of thinking about his options, he thought about what Walt had just told him. He knew he was right.

When he came back, Ramona took his arm and asked, "Where have you been?"

Sheffield told her about his visit with Walt and that he had gone for a long walk. During the rest of the afternoon, Sheffield and Ramona visited with family and friends as they gathered for the wedding, until it was time to start.

At twenty seven, Emmaline made a beautiful bride for the second time. It had been almost two and half years since she had been widowed.

The groom, Willie Casper, was the younger of the two sons of Bill and Marge Casper. His older brother, Rupert, was married to Armistice Austin, the daughter of Stirling and Mary Ann. Not long after Willie came home after losing his leg at Normandy, they began seeing each other. They had known each other growing up and he was only a year older than her. Things clicked with them he asked her to marry him. Not only did he fall in love with Emmaline, but he also fell in love with Carrie who was almost three and never knew her daddy.

After graduating from high school in 1937, Willie went to college and graduated with a degree in chemistry in the spring of 1942. That summer he enlisted in the army and went to officers training school. Upon receiving his commission as a 2nd Lieutenant and was assigned to be the commander of the 2nd Platoon of Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division. After extensive training at Fort Benning, Georgia, he shipped out to England with his unit in September 1943.

Willie's unit participated in the D-Day invasion by parachuting behind the beachhead on June 6, 1944. Six days later during the fighting to capture Carentan he was severely wounded when a German artillery shell exploded nearby, killing and wounding several of his men. As a result, Willie lost his left leg below the knee. Later that morning after Carentan had been taken, he was evacuated to England, where he spent the next several weeks in an Army hospital. Eventually he was discharged and returned home.

Now Willie stood next to Emmaline as he took her as his wife. He wore a prosthetic leg and got around as well as could be expected. It made Sheffield realize how grateful that he still had his leg. The

inconvenience of the numbness and tingling that he experienced was nothing compared to what Will endured.

Sheffield and Ramona sat through the wedding and then gathered in the hall afterwards for the reception. In visiting with the bride and groom, they learned that their immediate plans were to settle in Richmond where he was attending pharmacy school, at least for the time being. After that, they hoped to settle permanently in Roanoke.

After congratulating the bride and groom, they sat at a table with Shenan and Emily for refreshments. Later in the evening the reception became a dance. Sheffield and Ramona had the first dance together and then mixed with family and friends, including the bride and groom, for the next several numbers. Finally, Sheffield's leg had had enough and they returned to their table.

Marge Casper approached Sheffield with a couple that looked vaguely familiar. "Sheffield," she said, "I'd like you to meet my brother and his wife, George and Hattie Martin from Richmond." Turning to George and Hattie she said, "This is Emmaline's uncle, Sheffield's Brason and his wife, Ramona."

"We're pleased to meet you." Sheffield's said. Then added, "You look familiar. Have we met before?"

"Actually we have." George said. "It was several years ago at the hot springs in Ouray, Colorado. At the time we were living in Denver."

"That's why you look familiar to me. I remember you now. Your family and mine had dinner together later."

"That's right." George said.

Hattie looked at Ramona with a confused look on her face. She wasn't the woman that she remembered from that occasion.

Ramona sensed her dilemma and said, "You don't remember me because I wasn't there. That was Sheffield's first wife, Geannie."

"That's why I couldn't place you."

Still sensing that Hattie felt awkward, Ramona explained, "Geannie was my best friend, but she and their two children were killed at Pearl Harbor. Sheffield and I were married a couple of years later."

"How tragic." Hattie gasped. "Where they living there at the time?"

Ramona went onto give a brief explanation, to which George and Hattie listened to intently.

"So George, Marge said you're from Richmond. I take it that you don't live in Denver any more."

"No, after fifteen years we moved back to Virginia three years ago. Those are our kid over there, our daughter Betsy and her husband and two kids, and that's Junior."

"I sure wouldn't have recognized them." Sheffield said. "Kids have a way of growing up, don't they."

"It is a small world isn't it? I mean how people's paths cross from time to time." Hattie said. "It was

sure nice to see you again Sheffield. And it was nice to meet you Ramona.” After the brief encounter, George and Hattie went on to visit with others of their family.

“You handled that well, sweetheart.” Sheffield said.

“I could tell that the poor woman was almost beside herself trying to figure out why she couldn't place me.”

Eventually the reception wound down and people began leaving and Sheffield and Ramona went next door and went to bed. The next morning they attended services and had lunch. With another wedding behind them, they and Ruth Ann got back on the familiar road to Washington.

On Monday morning, Sheffield still didn't know what he was going to tell Admiral Ingram. He had to come to a decision one way or the other as to what he wanted to do. Walt was right. He needed guidance beyond his own wisdom.

Rather than going into his office, he decided to go the one place where he knew that he could clear his head and get closer to God, on whom he depended to make the correct choice. He drove over to the College Park Airport in Bethesda and presented his brand new private pilots license and checked out a Cessna C-145 Airmaster.

Sitting at the controls he went through the checklist. Everything checked out so he turned the starter switch and the propeller spun to life. Sheffield pushed the throttle forward and the RPMs increased. He let his feet off the brakes and taxied out onto the end of the runway. Again, he applied the brakes and revved the engine further. When the control tower cleared him for take off, he let his feet off the brakes and the plane surged down the runway into the wind. Seconds later, his wheels left the ground and he began climbing higher into the morning sky.

He circled around the airport a couple of times to gain altitude. When he was high enough, he headed southwest and was soon out over the countryside of Northern Virginia parallel to the Blue Ridge Mountains. It had been a long time since he had been in the air at the controls of a plane. It was exactly what he needed. With no struts or wires supporting the high mounted cantilever wooden wing, he had an excellent view of the valley below.

“Dear gracious Lord above,” he prayed. “I'm at a crossroads in my life and I need to know which way I should go. I have an opportunity with the airline that could take me a number of places. I also have the opportunity to go to sea again and defer leaving the Navy, perhaps even staying in.

“You have been so good to me throughout my life and I have been richly blessed to have had two good women in my life and two great kids, and I have a good family. You have spared my life for which I am grateful. Because of you, I have had a lot of opportunities over the years that have come my way without any

real effort on my part.

“Now, I don't know what to do. I want to do what you would have me do and be where you would have me to be. But I need you to show me which way to go. Please show me. Amen”

Sheffield let his mind go blank so as not to cloud the answer he was seeking with his own desires. He simply basked in the beauty of God's creation spread out below him and listened. He knew what to look for as he had received divine guidance in times past.

On many occasions during the war, he sought guidance before making a decision. Probably the best example was how to stop the Edelweisses with the minimal amount of casualties.

As he neared Charlottesville, he received his answer. It came as an impression upon his mind, much as he had experienced before. Only this time it was accompanied by a sensation that he had not experienced. It began in his heart and radiated throughout his entire body. The closest thing he could compare it to was a fire. The impression that he received was different from the way that he was leaning, but there was no doubt that it was what he was supposed to do.

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On March 15, 1946, Great Britain announced their intention to grant India their independence. The New York Municipal Airport was later renamed LaGuardia Airport. What eventually became JFK International Airport was still under construction at the time.

American Airlines headquarter was in New York City at the time. When the tower at 633 Third Avenue was completed in 1962, it served as the corporate offices until the company moved to the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport in 1979.

Admiral Jonas H. Ingram was the Commander in Chief of the Atlantic Fleet from November 15, 1944 to September 26, 1946. Previously he had been the Commander of the South Atlantic Force when Sheffield and the Reprisal were in the South Atlantic

Admiral Chester Nimitz was the Chief of Naval Operations from December 15, 1945 to December 15, 1947.

The Greek Civil War broke out on March 30, 1946 in which communist rebels backed by Communist Yugoslavia and Albania sought to overthrow the Greek government.

