

Chapter XX

Life Was Good

November 2, 1947 – January 22, 1948

The next day was Sunday. That morning Sheffield and Craig went to Priesthood Meeting and were joined by his father, Walt, Shenan, and the Austin brothers and some of their sons and sons in law, who were all attending for the first time. In all, there were fifteen first time visitors in attendance, which was about half as many as the number of regular branch members who were there that morning. In addition, Morris and Wayne Gover were also there. All of them were introduced and warmly welcomed.

Eugene Gordon, the Elders Quorum instructor set aside his prepared lesson and presented an overview of the priesthood instead. They discussed what it was, the restoration of the priesthood, and its functions. He cited the baptisms and confirmations that had been performed the evening before as examples.

They all returned for Sunday School with their families. The gospel essentials class moved to the Relief Society room to accommodate so many. Rather than continue with the next lesson for Sheffield and Ramona, Brother Furness went back to the first lesson in the manual for the benefit of all of the new investigators. Walt wasn't shy about asking questions, to which he always received a satisfactory answer.

After Sunday School Roger, had Sheffield and his family stay. First he had Sheffield come into his office. After visiting for a moment, he said, "Brother Brason, the reason that I wanted to see you is because I want to present you to receive the Aaronic Priesthood this afternoon in sacrament meeting. The way I see it, if you're worthy and ready to be baptized, your worthy and ready to be ordained to the priesthood. As you have learned, there are three offices in Aaronic Priesthood. I propose that you be ordained a Priest. What do you say?"

"I'd be honored. Its something I've been looking forward to since I first learned about it."

"You will continue attending with the elders, naturally. I also propose to have Craig ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood as Teacher. Now as a Priest, you will have the authority to ordain him. Are you up to it?"

"If you show me how."

"Of course. Not only that, but when Janet gets her cast off, you'll be able to baptize her. And of course you'll also be able to administer the sacrament. Nothing like letting you exercise your priesthood right from the start."

"I consider it and honor. In the Navy I had a lot of authority, but it was nothing like what this will be."

Next, Roger had Craig come in and he talked to him about being ordained to the priesthood as well. Finally, he had the whole family in. He explained, "You are such a great blessing to the branch. As you can see, we are small in numbers and we don't have enough people for all the callings we need to fill and Some people have more than one. In the west and in areas like Washington D. C. were the church is more

established, there are enough people to staff a fully functioning ward.

“Serving in a calling is one of the blessings of membership in the church, not only for the person, but also for those they serve. Everyone has talents and gifts to contribute, some they don't even know they have. My counselors and I in conjunction with the rest of the branch leadership have discussed you and prayerfully considered not only where you were needed but also where you could grow.

“So with that said, Ramona I extend to you a call to serve as the Second Counselor in the Relief Society Presidency doubling as the Cultural Refinement teacher, in which you will teach a lesson once a month. You will be working with Jane Anderson and Chantelle. As you have learned, the role of the Relief Society in providing relief for those in need. Will you accept this call?”

“Wow. I thought you'd just let me get used to things first. But yes, I'd be happy to do what I can.”

“Good, we really need you. Don't worry, they'll show you what to do and will patient with you. There's no better way to learn how an organization works like getting involved. By accepting this calling, we can move some people around and divide the the young women into two age groups where technically there should be three. This will bring us one step closer to being more fully organized and staffed.

“Now Sheffield, we have something for you too. I extend to you a call to teach the high school juniors and seniors' Sunday School Class. The class includes Craig and Read and some of the kids you know from school, plus one or two who have finished high school. Will you accept this call?”

“I don't know enough about things to be teaching others.” Sheffield said reluctantly.

Roger said, “Not to worry, the kids will teach you. Its a fact that the teacher always learns more than what they are able to teach. Don't you find that true with your government class?”

“Yeah, I do. I learn more than I can ever include in my lesson plan.”

“The same will be true here. Besides, everything you need is in the lesson manual. So will you accept?”

“When you put it that way, I have no reason not to. Yes. I'll accept.”

“Good.” Roger said. You'll do just fine. The Sunday School Presidency will get you going and are there to help you. By you accepting this call, we are able to divide the two youth classes we presently have into three. Again that brings us closer to how things should be.

“This afternoon in Sacrament meeting,” Roger told them, “You will be presented to be sustained by the branch members for both your callings and priesthood ordinations.” He went onto explain the purpose of being sustained and what it meant to be set apart.

They hadn't had a lot of time to visit with the Govers with all that was going on and finally had some time for their guests. Thats when Sheffield asked Morris to ordain him. Before long, they all had to go back to the meetinghouse for sacrament meeting. The chapel quickly filled up and spilled over into the cultural

hall as there were more than fifty people more than usual with the Brasons, Austins and the Govers. Extra chairs had to be set up to accommodate everyone.

During the business portion of the meeting, the Brason family were presented as members of the ward and welcomed by a sustaining vote. In addition, Sheffield and Craig were presented to receive the Aaronic Priesthood and to be ordained to the offices of Priest and Teacher respectively. Some other people were released from callings that they had served in and were sustained to other callings. Finally, Sheffield and Ramona were sustained to the callings that they had accepted earlier in the day.

After the sacrament had been administered, the meeting was opened to the bearing of testimonies. After the third or fourth person, Sheffield unexpectedly found himself standing at the pulpit. He said, "Two months ago I attended here for the first time. It was a meeting just like this. I marveled as person after person stood here to say that they 'knew' this or that about the church to be true. Now today, I can stand here and say, 'I know.'

"I didn't know it then, but seventeen years ago I was put onto the path that has brought us here. It began when my third child and second son died after living for only a few hours. I was away and never even got to see him. My late wife began a quest for answers to questions that she had regarding God's plan for his children. She first went to our minister, my brother who is here today. He couldn't answer them for her so she began searching the Bible, the only source available to her, for answers. She began writing down the insights that she received, but that only added to her list of questions.

"For a few years prior to the war, we lived in Hawaii and one weekend we were on vacation and happened upon the temple in Laie. We didn't know what it was as we walked around the grounds. No one was there for us to talk to but we felt a very powerful feeling there. My wife said that whatever that place was, it held the key to the answers to her questions and our connection to each other as a family in heaven. As we left, she wrote down the name of the church that was on the sign at the gate with the intention to look into it.

"Two weeks later, she and our two children were killed during the attack on Pearl Harbor. I was able to bring them home to Roanoke for burial, and then went off to war. To make a long story short, Ramona had been my wife's best friend and she stayed in touch with me. After being injured off Salerno, I was sent to Bethesda Naval hospital, where she had been transferred to. She nursed me back to health and I fell in love with her. We were married here in Roanoke on January twenty second, nineteen forty four. Again I went off to war. After retiring from the Navy we settled here.

"Through out the years we had often wondered about her questions and insights as did everyone in my family and my late wife's family. If we ever found anyone who could give us the answers, we would certainly be interested.

“One day during the summer, I was going through her Bible and piece of paper fell out. It was the piece that she had written the name of the church on. I put it back without really giving it a thought. The next day, we received a wedding announcement from Morris Gover, who had served under me as my personal assistant for a good share of the war. Morris is also here today. I knew that he was Mormon but didn't know what that really meant. Then I met many of you at the wedding of my niece, Sylvia.

“When Morris's wedding announcement arrived, I put two and two together and realized that the Mormon Church and the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were the same thing. That was the name of the church that she had written down. We made a trip to Utah for his wedding. While there, we learned that this church had the answers to her questions and squared exactly with her insights.

“When we got home, I called Roger Rowan, with whom I had developed a friendship at the Sylvia's wedding. He invited us to attend church and put us in touch with Hyrum Fielding and Jack Brown. Over the last two months they taught us about the church and we began attending here regularly. I read the Book of Mormon as did Ramona and the kids. Then two weeks ago yesterday, I made it matter of earnest, sincere prayer. I got my answer and I knew it was all true. Ramona had already beat me to it.

“Then last night, I along with my family, except for Janet, were baptized and confirmed. It was my honor to have my trusted friend, Morris Gover baptize me.

“Now I can say, I know that this church is the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. I know that the Book of Mormon is true. I know that Joesph Smith was a prophet of God and that George Albert Smith is God's prophet on the earth today. I know the priesthood has been restored. I now understand that that day off Salerno, my life was spared by the power of the priesthood. Now after this meeting, I will be ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood. I look forward to receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood a year from now and taking my family to the temple.

“I look forward to being a member of the church and participating in it fully. I'm a little apprehensive about teaching a Sunday School, but I look forward to it. I don't know how the kids in my class feel about having to deal with me at school and on Sunday too.” He closed his testimony and returned to his family in the congregation.

A couple more people went up the pulpit and then Celia Webster went up. As she expressed her feelings she said that it was because of Brother Brason that she had come back to church. She told how the loss of her husband had left her angry at God, but when he told her his story and how his faith in God got him through, she realized that she was wrong. She thanked him for coming into her life and turned her from the direction that she was headed.

After the meeting, Sheffield and his family and the Govers waited in the waiting area outside of the branch presidents office for a few minutes while Roger to took care of some other business. When he was

finished, he took them into the council room where they were joined by others. The first thing to take care of was the ordinations. Roger had Sheffield sit in the chair that was placed in the middle of the room. Morris laid his hands on his head, joined by Wayne and Roger. Morris conferred the Aaronic Priesthood on him and ordained him to the office of a Priest within the Aaronic Priesthood and gave him a blessing.

After standing up, the three men each shook his hand and Ramona had a hug for him. Roger said, "See how easy that was. Do you need any help?"

"Yeah." Sheffield said. "I'm not quite sure how that goes."

"Don't worry about getting the wording exact, as long as the main elements are there." He then reviewed with him what those main elements were.

Craig sat down and Sheffield placed his hands on Craig's head, joined by the other three men. He began, "Craig Taylor Brason, by the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood, we confer upon you the Aaronic Priesthood and ordain you a Teacher in the priesthood." Sheffield paused for a moment and nervously pronounced a blessing upon him that he would continue to grow into the man that he was becoming and always look after his sisters.

After the amen was pronounced, Craig stood up. Each of the other three men shook his hand, but Sheffield had a hug for him. Following the ordinations, Roger set apart Sheffield and Ramona to their callings.

By the time they got home, there was still enough daylight left for Sheffield to give Morris and Wayne a tour of the Two Star Ranch while their wives fixed supper. Up until then, they hadn't had much time to visit with all that had been going on. The next morning after breakfast, Sheffield took the Gover's to the airport before he went to school.

After the special weekend, the family went about their normal activities of the week with work and school. Janet was getting around better on her crutches. When she showed up at school, everyone wanted to know what happened. She came home that afternoon with her cast decorated by artwork and the names of her classmates. During the week, Craig and Norma attended Mutual, and Janet went to Primary. On Thursday, Ramona attended Relief Society for the first time as a member of the presidency. She had meet prior to the meeting with the other ladies in the presidency.

Sheffield had worked his team hard in practice all week in preparation for their match in Lynchburg against the Hilltoppers of EC Glass High School. The Hilltoppers were a tough team who had beat the Magicians the year before. On Thursday, Mr. Capps met with the team and presented a forty five minute psychology lesson designed to give them a competitive edge.

As the team boarded the bus on Friday afternoon for the trip to Lynchburg, they were confident that they were ready. Sheffield and Coach Karrington were also confident. Mr. Capps road along with them on

the bus as an unofficial assistant coach.

Several spectators, fans, and families made the fifty six mile trip to watch the the Magicians. Among them were the Brasons and the Rowans. Sheffield managed to break away from the team for a moment and came as sat with Ramona and the girls in the bleachers as his team warmed up on the gymnasium floor. After a moment he returned to the team as they returned to their locker room. He gave them a pep talk and then they knelt as a team as one of the boys said a prayer.

The junior varsity team had lost their match but that didn't deter the varsity wrestlers. The first wrestler on the mat, upset his opponent much to the delight of the visiting crowd. The same with the second and third wrestler. The fourth barely lost his match.

Then it was Craig's turn. The referee blew his whistle and Craig held his own against the senior that he was up against. At the end of the first period, Craig was behind in points. Halfway through the second period, the over confident Hilltopper made mistake. Seeing his opportunity, Craig seized the moment, pinning his stunned opponent and won the match.

Read Roawn was up after Craig and inspired by his friend's victory, dispatched his opponent in the first period. As the match went on, only two more Magicians were defeated. In the end, the Jefferson High School varsity team pulled off what was called a major upset of third ranked EC Glass, which moved the Magicians up in the state wide rankings.

With all that had been going on, there were some chores that needed taken care of around the house and the ranch. Sheffield and Craig worked on getting things winterized as they were into the second Saturday of November. It was sunny day with fairly mild temperatures that required only a light jacket. It was perfect day to get things taken care of. That time of the year there was no telling when it could turn off cold an stormy.

Sunday found the Roanoke Branch Meetinghouse bulging at the seams again as the Brasons attended church that day. Not only did the other Brason families and the Austins return, but during the week a new family from Richmond had moved into the area. Burt and Christina Turner and their six children were added to the branch. One of their daughters was the same age as Norma.

Sheffield and Craig attended Priesthood Meeting as priesthood holders for the first time. During Sunday School, Sheffield taught his Sunday School class for the first time. Roger was right, he learned a lot more from it than he taught. Then that afternoon in Sacrament Meeting, Sheffield had the privilege of blessing the sacrament while Craig joined five other young men in passing it to the congregation.

Over the next two or three weeks, the Brasons and Austins were progressing in their cottage meetings with the missionaries and as predicted, each family progressed at their own pace. The one who was progressing the fastest was Walt, the former Methodist minister.

That week the weather turned off cold and there wasn't enough feed left in the pasture for the calves and horses, so each morning and evening, they had to be fed a little hay. Craig loaded several bales onto the wagon and twice each day, he pulled it out into the pasture with the tractor to feed the livestock. After missing a week earlier in the month, he and his dad had resumed his flying lessons. As the month progressed so did the Magicians winning streak with two more wins.

Norma made good progress with her piano lessons and Janet's leg continued to heal. Having a broken leg didn't keep her from gathering eggs from the chickens, but now that it was getting colder, they weren't laying as much. As for Ramona, after selling yet another house, she had bought another one and was having Ray remodel it. Over all she had done very well with her new career.

During November, a district conference was held at the Roanoke Branch Meetinghouse. Once every three months, the regular meetings were dispensed with as members from all of the branches in the district came together from as far away as Charlottesville, one hundred twenty miles to the northeast; Bluefield one hundred five miles to the west; and Danville eighty miles to the southwest. In all, there were eight branches that made up the Virginia West District. The Roanoke and Lynchburg Branches were the by far the largest and best established, while two or three of the others only had a handful of members.

To accommodate those in attendance, chairs were set up in the cultural hall and up on the stage. In addition every available room was stuffed to capacity in which people listened over speakers. President Henry Rowan, the District President indicated that for their next district conference in February, they would look into using an auditorium or gymnasium at either Jefferson High School, Hollins, or Roanoke College. He expressed hope for a new, larger meetinghouse in the next few years to accommodate the ever growing membership.

On the third Thursday of November, Ramona taught her cultural refinement lesson. She had spent a couple of weeks preparing it and even went to the library to get some additional information about the subject country, which happened to be Germany.

As she introduced the lesson, it wasn't surprising that the subject had been met with resistance by some women who were still bitter over the war. They had either had husbands, sons, or other relatives who had been involved in fighting the Germans. Some of whom either came home with severe wounds or didn't come home at all.

Ramona tried to sooth some of the feelings and attitudes by saying, "I understand how you feel. My husband, Sheffield, spent two years during the war fighting the Germans as well. Three or four times his ship was attacked and damaged by the Germans. The last time was off Salerno, Italy when he he too was seriously injured. He spent several months in the hospital and it took even longer to heal. He still suffers the effects and will for the rest of his life. That's why he walks with a cane."

At that point, someone commented that they weren't aware that was why he used a cane.

Ramona continued, "He's lucky to be alive, let alone still have his leg. But do you know what, I have never heard him speak derogatory or disrespectful about the Germans, let alone the Japanese; they're next months lesson. I don't know that I'd be able to do that."

Sarah, who was there along with others from the Brason and Austin families, commented on how her only brother never returned from the First World War and that she struggled with her feelings toward the Germans at first, but when Walt returned from the war he explained that those of Germany's leaders who had started and promoted the war would be held responsible by God and that the men in uniform were for the most part no different from the soldiers on the our side. Most of them didn't want to be there either and longed to be home with their families and loved ones as well. He said that German mothers and fathers mourned for their fallen sons just the same. She concluded her comment by explaining how that changed her perspective.

Someone brought up all of the welfare assistance that the church had been sending to Germany to alleviate the suffering of the German people following the war and that the missionaries had returned. Someone else mentioned all of the aid that the United States government was providing to Germany as well.

Ramona asked, "How many here have German ancestry?" She raised her own hand and said, "My Grandfather Erhart was half German."

Others raised their hands as well, even some of those who earlier expressed some animosity.

Once the political ramifications had been set aside, Ramona went on to cover the material about the rich culture that Germany fostered. She began with the influence of Martin Luther in the reformation, which paved the way for the restoration of the gospel. She focused on the language and literature somewhat but spent a fare amount of time discussing the contributions that Germany had made to the world of music by the renowned classical composers including Bach, Mozart and Beethoven.

After the meeting, many of the ladies thanked her for such a wonderful lesson. In the end, just like Sheffield, she had gotten more out of it through her preparation. Over all she was satisfied at how it went. She wasn't as worried about the next lesson, but she really looked forward to two lessons in particular that would come up later in the year. One was on Polynesian culture and the other was about the American Indians. Both of those she could really relate to.

Over the weeks, both Sheffield and Ramona came to more fully understand their assignments and grew from them. Twice more he had the privilege of blessing the sacrament, once in sacrament meeting and once in Sunday School. Craig had the opportunity of either preparing or passing the sacrament each week. It didn't take long for the young women mutual leaders to discover that Norma was getting pretty good at playing the piano and asked her to be the pianist during Mutual opening exercises. Ramona continued to

participate in the choir which presented "Come Ye Thankful People Come" on the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

School let after only a half a day on Wednesday for the Thanksgiving holiday. As promised Sheffield hosted the entire family in their new home. During the afternoon, he and Craig set up the folding tables and chairs that he had purchased just for the occasion. Ramona and the girls spent the afternoon baking rolls and pies.

As the family began arriving on Thursday, they each brought with them various elements of the dinner. Someone brought the mashed potatoes, someone else the green bean casserole and so on. The table was set and the food set out while the turkey came out of the oven.

Everyone was there, even those away at school and Ruth Ann and Joseph had flown up from Texas and Wendalynn brought her fiancée. They were getting married the following Monday. Emmett and Ellen were aging more quickly as they were getting older and Emmett's Parkinson's had gotten much worse. In addition to the entire family, Elder Perry and Elder Commons were also invited and were there.

Of the Brason family, Ruth Ann and Joseph were the only ones who had expressed that they were not interested in investigating the church. It didn't fit their lifestyle. In fact, Ruth Ann hadn't attended the Methodist church for a long time. Wendalynn was taking a half hearted approach to it as she was preoccupied with getting married. Her fiancée was not from a religiously inclined home, and was not interested either. But Delbert, Tim, and Curtis, who were away at school, were meeting with the missionaries.

The house had plenty of room to accommodate the family that had grown so big. Despite the number of people there, there was still plenty of leftovers to send home with whoever would take them.

The next Sunday after Church, Ramona had invited Ray to Sunday dinner. She had also invited Celia Webster and her girls, Leah and Rachel. Ramona thought they would be pretty good match. They had got acquainted at church and at least knew who each other was and agreed to get together over dinner with Sheffield and Ramona.

Even though Celia, who at twenty seven was a two years older than Ray, they found that they had a lot in common and by the time the evening was over, they had agreed to go out together the following Friday evening. Norma was quick to offer to babysit for her, but Celia's mother had that covered.

On Friday, Ray picked Celia up and took her to dinner and a movie. Since they both lived with their parents, they ended up at the Browns and talked late into the evening. In the end, they agreed to see each other again.

Meanwhile, Wendalynn's wedding was on Monday December 1st. They were married in Shenan's home by the justice of the peace and only invited a few close family members, including her Uncle Sheffield

and Aunt Ramona.

Since Sheffield's 49th birthday was on Sunday, they celebrated it on Saturday. Ramona and the girls baked a birthday cake for him. In the evening, Romona and the kids took him out to dinner at the Pizza Joint. For the last few years, Sheffield observed his birthday by remembering what he had lost on his forty third birthday in 1941. This year, however, he celebrated his birthday rejoicing in the new family that he had been given.

December marched quickly right up to the doorsteps of Christmas. Sheffield bought enough outdoor Christmas lights to string all around the eaves of their house and along the fence along the lane leading to the highway. He and Craig strung them up on the second Saturday in December.

On the third Friday in December, the team didn't have a match so after school Sheffield and Craig drove the pickup up into the cabin with Ramona and the girls following right behind in her car. After spending a cozy evening at the cabin, the next morning they set out looking for a Christmas tree. By noon they had returned home with a seven and a half foot eastern white pine and put it up in the living room window.

They spent the afternoon decorating it mostly with the Taylor's ornaments and decorations along with a few that Sheffield had from Geannie. The one new decoration was a strand of bubble lights that appeared on the market only the year before.

As a family, they adopted most of the Christmas traditions that the kids had grown up with. Again they were interspersed with some that carried over from Geannie. As a new tradition, Ramona and the kids made a huge batch of Christmas sugar cookies which were taken around to family, neighbors and friends.

While Christmas shopping one evening they went into their favorite bookstore to look around. Sheffield saw a number of books about various ships that had fought in the war. He looked at one about the carrier war and to his dismay, the Reprisal wasn't even mentioned. As he put it back on the shelf, he announced to his family that he was going to write a book about the Reprisal.

Janet got an early Christmas gift when on the Monday before Christmas, she had her cast removed. School let out after a half day on the Tuesday twenty third. On the afternoon of Christmas Eve they went to a matinee of "Miracle on 34th Street" that had come out earlier that year.

That was truly a memorable and magical Christmas for the Brasons. Sheffield had restored to him that which had been taken from him, a wife and children. Ramona had that which she thought she would never have, Sheffield and the children she couldn't bare. Craig, Norma, and Janet had parents who loved and cherished them. The gifts they exchanged paled in comparison to the bond that made them a family, born like a phoenix from the ashes of sorrow and grief. Above everything else, they had found what Geannie had been looking for, the key that would bind them as a family for eternity. Life was good!

The Saturday after Christmas, they gathered at the meetinghouse and once more Sheffield stepped

down into the baptismal font. This time to baptize Janet who had to wait eight weeks for her turn. After Janet, Sheffield had the privilege of baptizing Walt and Sarah, their daughter Emmaline, and her husband Willie Casper. In addition, Walt and Sarah's other daughter, Sylvia who was seven and half months pregnant, was baptized by he husband, Scott Rowan.

That was only the beginning. Others in the family were progressing to that point and would soon follow. In addition to the Brasons and Austins, the missionaries had discovered members who were not known of, and picked up some additional investigators, including students from Hollins and Roanoke College.

As 1947 came to a close, Sheffield and Ramona looked back on a year more incredible than they ever could have imagined. Besides all of the new things that had entered their lives, they had settled into their new careers. Ramona had been very successful in her real estate ventures. She made back all of the money she had invested, plus a considerable amount. She made more money than she ever could have nursing or teaching.

Sheffield really enjoyed coaching and teaching. He couldn't even imagine himself managing the airport services for American Airlines in Honolulu, or anywhere else. It couldn't possibly be as rewarding as what he was doing . True, he could have made a lot more money, but with Sheffield, what he did never was about making money. It was about passion. It had been so during his career in the Navy, it was so now.

1948 began with a skiff of fresh snow on the ground. Sheffield decided that there was no better time to begin his project than on the first day of the new year. He'd been thinking a lot about how he wanted to go about doing it. Ramona was supportive of him in his endeavor, her only advise was, "Don't make it boring."

He never did learn how to type correctly, but he didn't let that stop him. He sat down at the desk in the office with Geannie's old typewriter in front of him. He inserted a clean sheet of paper into the carriage and rolled it into position. He took a deep breath, rubbed his hands together, and began pecking at the keys.

"REPRISAL: The Forgotten Carrier" he looked at it and was satisfied with the title. He hit the carriage return a couple of times to drop down further on the page and typed, "By Rear Admiral Sheffield Brason, USN (retired)".

Again he was satisfied, not knowing what he was getting himself into. He rolled the piece of paper out of carriage and put in another clean sheet. At the top, he typed, "CHAPTER 1" and dropped down a line and typed "CONCEPTION".

He began by giving the background information as to how the ship came to be. After completing the first paragraph, he had Xed out three typographical errors. Oh well. He wasn't going for perfection. He had a story to tell. He figured that if it was good enough when he was done, he'd hire a professional typist to go through and retype it for him. Then if it was good enough, he had dreams and hopes of submitting it for

publication. He figured every man who had ever served aboard her would buy a copy.

The next two hours flew by and it was time for lunch and he nearly had the first chapter wrapped up, typos and all. He set it aside and went out into the kitchen for lunch. He never made it back to it the rest of the day, as playing games as family took precedence.

On Friday and Saturday, along with taking down the Christmas tree and outdoor lights, Sheffield had finished the first chapter and had moved on to chapter two which he titled "Construction" and was up to the point where he first reported for duty as the captain of the Reprisal.

Naturally they attended church on Sunday. On Monday, he and the kids went back to school after the Christmas break. He worked his team hard to have them ready for their first match of the new year that Friday. Over the holidays some of them had gained weight and were out of their weight brackets. It was surprising how soft some of the boys got in only two weeks. There was just five days to shed the extra pounds and re tone their muscles. Consequently, it wasn't enough and they lost the match.

However the match against Staunton Military Academy the following week as a different story. They were ready physically and psychologically. They celebrated their victory against a tough team all the way home on the bus.

During the two weeks since going back to school, Sheffield had a little time to work on his book. He had finished the second chapter with the ship being commissioned and began the next chapter that dealt with her shakedown cruise to the Gulf of Mexico.

In the meantime, Ray had approached Ramona with an offer to buy the house that he was just finishing up. He explained that he had the money for a down payment and had tentatively lined up the financing. Ramona sensed that there something that he wasn't telling her. Reluctantly he admitted that he wanted to buy it so he could ask Celia to marry him. That got Ramona's attention and she agreed to sell it to him for what it cost her to buy plus the cost of the materials that went into it. She promised that she would keep things to herself until he actually proposed.

After school on the Tuesday the twentieth, they celebrated Janet's twelfth birthday by going to the Pizza Joint for dinner. During the afternoon, Ramona had baked a chocolate cake with white icing. After dinner, they came home for cake and ice cream. The thing that Janet was most excited about in turning twelve was to be able to go to Mutual like Norma and Craig. That evening she did just that.

Two days later, there was cause to celebrate again as it was Sheffield and Ramona's fourth anniversary. Being a week night, they didn't do any thing too special, except to go out to dinner, just the two of them, and no this time they didn't go to the Pizza Joint.

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