

Chapter XXXIX

Respect, Pride, Solidarity, Loyalty

June 1, 1952 – June 8, 1952

On Sunday morning, Sheffield and Craig, both wearing their uniforms, went to Priesthood Meeting while Ramona and the girls, including Edith, got ready for Sunday School.

Before getting in the shower, Janet looked at herself in the mirror. The bruise on her chest was about as big as it had been the day before, but not as dark. However, it was still tender to the touch. After drying off, she applied some more ointment to the damaged tissue. When she got dressed, she put on the same thing that she had worn to the funeral the day before, for the same reasons. She felt self-conscious about not wearing a brassier to church, of all places, but she knew that Ramona was right, it would only irritate it and make it worse. After putting on her clothes, she again looked herself over in the mirror to make sure that it wasn't obvious. How embarrassing that would be!

By the time they were ready, Sheffield and Craig came home to take them to Sunday School. Being fast Sunday, breakfast was skipped. Ramona and the girls went in one car and Craig and Edith followed in their's.

After the meeting, they came home long enough for Craig and Edith to get their things and drive to the train station. Sheffield, Ramona, and the girls followed in Sheffield's car. At the train station they were met by Grandma Brason and Edith's parents, Stirling and Mary Ann. It was tearful separation for Edith although he would only be gone for a month.

Craig turned and gave Edith one last long hug and kiss. Then he took Ramona in his arms and gave her a quick kiss on the lips. Something he had never done before. "I love you, Mom."

Ramona melted as he released her. "I love you too, Craig."

Next he gave Norma a hug and kiss on the cheek. When he went to hug Janet, she put her hand out to stop him. "Oh yeah," he said. "I almost forgot." Instead he wrapped one arm around her shoulder and pulled her in tight for a kiss on the cheek.

"I'll have a big hug waiting for you when you come home." Janet promised.

He also had hugs and kisses for his grandmother and mother-in-law and a handshake for his father-in-law. Last of all, he came to his dad. Sheffield shook his hand and pulled him in close for a hug. When he let go, he saluted the hansom sailor. "I'm proud of you airman, and I love you son."

"I love you too, Dad." Craig said as he returned the salute.

Craig picked up his sea bag in one hand and waved with the other and turned around and boarded the train and took his seat. As the train began pulling away from the platform, he waved through the window. His entourage on the platform waved back. Once the train was heading down the tracks, there was no need to linger any longer and they all went home. Edith went to stay with her parents for a couple of

days before she had to be back to work.

Later in the afternoon, Sheffield, Ramona and the girls went to sacrament meeting. They were surprised when Janet got up and walked up to the podium to bear her testimony. She looked over the congregation, took a deep breath, and began speaking.

“For those of you who might not know, my brother, sister and I were adopted by the Brasons over five years ago after both of our parents died. I am so thankful for them for taking us into their home. That's how we became a family.

“I'm so thankful for my Dad and all that he does for me and I'm so proud of him for serving our country. I'm thankful for my Mom and the way that she takes care of me through all of my accidents. I had another one just the day before yesterday when I got hit by a line drive while playing a softball. And no, I won't show you my bruise.

“I asked my Mom why these things always happen to me. She said, 'it was my trial in life.' I'd like to tell the Lord that I think I'm beginning to get the message.

“Yesterday we attended the funeral of our natural grandmother. It really caused me to think. I knew that I was fortunate to be in the Brason family, but yesterday I realized just how fortunate I am, I mean we are. At the funeral there was nothing said of the next life or what awaits on the other side. It was more of a celebration of here ninety one years on this earth.

“It made me reflect on how much more we know because of the gospel. We talked about it on the way home and I told my Mom and Dad how glad I am that we found the church and could be sealed together forever in the temple. I look forward to one day when some special someone, whoever he may be, will take me to the temple to be sealed to him.

“I'm so thankful to be a member of the Church and for the blessings that are mine because of it. I know that it is true. I know that God lives and loves me. I know that Jesus Christ died for my sins and because of him, we will all be resurrected. I know that he stands at the head of this church and directs through a living prophet, President David O. McKay. I know Joseph Smith saw Heavenly Father and Jesus and restored the true church to the earth and translated the Book of Mormon. I know all of this to be true because the Holy Ghost told me before I was baptized, even though I was only eleven at the time. I'm grateful that I know these things. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”

Janet, with tears trickling down her cheeks, returned to her seat and sat next to Ramona who put her arm around her shoulder and pulled her close.

With the entire week off, Sheffield found that there was plenty to do, especially with Craig gone for the month. He spent Monday morning mowing hay and that afternoon raked it into windrows to dry. On

Tuesday he went car shopping. He had been thinking about it ever since the drive to Richmond on Friday. He wanted something with lots of room for the family now that they were all bigger. Whatever it was, it had to have four doors.



He wanted something brand new and looked around at the dealers. He looked at a 1952 Lincoln Continental at the same place where Ramona got her car. He wasn't satisfied that that was what he was looking for and went to two or three other dealerships. Then on the lot of a Buick dealer, he found exactly what he was looking for. It happened to be a brand new 1952 Buick

Roadmaster Riviera four door sedan; glen green with a terrace green top.

It was a luxury car with an extra long 130¼ inch wheelbase, designed to seat six adults comfortably. Its Fireball overhead valve straight eight cylinder engine and four barrel carburetor delivered 170 horse power. The car he was looking at came with a new feature introduced as option in 1952, power steering for an almost effortless driving experience. During the test drive he learned that the interior was insulated against the sounds of the engine and the road making for an ultra quiet ride with the windows up. This was definitively the car he was looking for.

It had the classic Buick chrome grill that looked like an open mouth, full of teeth that sometimes has been called the Buick "dollar grin", and four of Buick's trademark VentiPorts along each fender. Another feature was the Weather Warden venti-heater with thermostatically controlled heat settings for winter comfort and summer cooling from two individually controlled intake vents that draw in air from outside.

Because of the war, car sales were down so the dealer knocked five hundred dollars off the sticker price of \$3,453 down to \$2,953. In addition he gave him \$750 for his 1946 Chevrolet Sport Coupe making it \$2,203. When the sales manager sat down with him to finalize the deal, he discovered that Sheffield was none other than Roanoke's home town hero and knocked off the \$203 as a military discount. Sheffield hadn't spent much of the salary that he had earned while deployed overseas during the last year, and was able to write out a check for the full amount.

After stopping by the court house to get it licensed he drove it home to show it off to Ramona and girls. Naturally, they were all impressed and wanted to go for a ride. Sheffield took them for a spin and gave each of them a turn behind the wheel.

"Tomorrow's my birthday, Babe." Ramona said. "I want you to take us all for a good long ride."

"Where would you like to go?"

She thought for a moment and said, "I want to go up to Warm Springs and have a nice soak."

"We haven't been there for quiet a while. That sounds good to me. What do you girls think?"

"Yeah that sounds fun." Janet agreed.

"We used to go there with our parents when we were little." Norma chimed in.

The next morning, Ramona's forty ninth birthday, they packed a picnic and their bathing suites and some towels. Just after eight o'clock they headed north on US Highway 220. The Roadmaster handled equally as well up and over the hills as it did on the straight, open highway. Eighty eight miles and an hour and forty five minutes, they were there.

After paying the admission, they went into the wooden, octagonal building. A narrow boardwalk surrounded the pool with small changing rooms along the outside. Sheffield and Ramona stepped into one and the girls into another to change into their bathing suits. They had the place to themselves as they stepped into the ninety eight degree mineral water, fed by a natural spring.

As they settled in, Ramona said, "Now, this just what I wanted." and added, "This feels so good."

"It reminds me of the bathhouse in Tokyo." Norma remembered.

"Yeah." Janet said. "Except we can wear our bathing suits."

"But it felt so good to be free of them." Norma admitted.

"I agree." Ramona said as she sat back. "I'll bet Ray could build something for me off the back porch, only much smaller."

Before long, they were joined by another family.

After soaking for as long as they could stand it, they finally got out. When they did, Sheffield commented that his leg didn't feel numb and tingly and attributed it to the mineral water. Janet added that he bruise felt better, too. After changing back into their clothes, they went outside and enjoyed their picnic before driving home.

The next day Sheffield received a letter in the mail from John Stienmann form MGM that had bounced all around the world. First it had been sent to Japan but didn't catch up with the Reprisal until after it returned to Norfolk. They forwarded it to his Pentagon office. Lieutenant Moncur must have been in the office and sent it to his home address. After four weeks from when the letter was postmarked it finally caught up with him. The letter said that after some delays, they were ready to begin production of the follow up to "Neptune's Realm" and for Sheffield to contact him.

Sheffield dialed his number, but he was out of the office and left a message with his secretary that he had called.

About an hour and half later, John called back and wanted to know if there was any chance he could fly out to California to meet with him. Sheffield explained that his current assignment wouldn't allow

him the flexibility to do that. In the interest of time, John decided to conduct his business over the telephone.

He explained that they were ready to begin production on the new movie that was tentatively titled "Mediterranean Summer" and would reuse most of the sets, models, and action footage from "Neptune's Realm. Once again Ronald Reagan was set to star as Capitan Brason, Anne Baxter would play Ramona, Richard Basehart was to play Commander Terry, and once again Cliff Robertson would portray Morris Gover.

After all of that was hashed out, John went onto give a brief synopsis of the screen play. The movie would begin with the Reprisal's return to Norfolk from operations in the North Atlantic. As it tided up to the dock, Ramona was waiting for him. Their reunion would take them to Roanoke where her character and relationship to Geannie would be developed, including a flashback to when Geannie died. During all of this, Sheffield feelings for her would be kindled.

Once that was established, Sheffield sails to the Mediterranean and into action off Sicily and the run in with the Army Air Force. One segment would be set in Algiers where he buys the dress for Ramona and goes for a camel ride. The main action sequence would be the incident off Salerno where the ship is hit and Sheffield is injured while Commander Terry fights to save the ship and its return to Algiers.

At that point Sheffield is sent home and is nursed back to health by Ramona where their love deepens. They are married and after a while he sails off to the war in the Pacific, promising to return.

Sheffield's response was, "That's pretty much how it all happened." and gave his consent to proceed.

Mr. Stienmann assured him that they would get right on it and that should wrap up sometime in the fall and be ready for release by the end of the year. But first he would send a release for him to sign as he had done with "Neptune's Realm". Once he returned it, they'd get started.

When Ramona came home from taking care of some business, Sheffield announced, "You're going to be in the movies." and told her all about his conversation with Mr. Steinmann.

"So who's going to be me?" she was curious to know.

"An actress by the name of Anne Baxter."

"I've seen her in two or three films and in magazines. She's gorgeous and she makes a good blond. I think she's a great choice. So when will we be able to see it?"

"By the end of the year."

"I can't wait to see it. It was one thing seeing you in the movies, but it will be interesting seeing myself."

The weather had been perfect all week and the hay had dried sufficiently. Sheffield was out early

Thursday morning while the dew was still on and began baling. After breakfast, Ramona and the girls along with Wade and Read Rowan came out into the field with the pickup and hay wagon and began gathering up the bales while Sheffield finished.

Janet's bruise had subsided to about half of its original size. but her breastbone was still tender, Fearing that there might be a hairline fracture that was still healing, Ramona wouldn't let her do any heavy lifting, so her job was to drive the pickup. Norma was actually a lot of help and could lift the bales as good as the guys, but for Ramona they were almost too much. She went ahead and rolled one row of bales over into another. Norma and Wade lifted them onto the wagon and Read stacked them. Once the wagon was full they loaded the pickup up and headed for the barnyard with Wade and Norma riding on top of the wagon, holding hands and talking and laughing, their legs dangling over the edge of the stack of bales. Read rode atop of the bales in the back of the pickup and Ramona rode in the cab with Janet.

They all worked to unload the wagon and put it into the stack, except for Janet. Once they were finished they went back after another load. They just about had a full load and had caught up with Sheffield on the baler and had to wait for him to finish the last windrow. When he was finished, he drove the tractor and baler back to the barn. As the load came in from the field, he sent Ramona and Janet to the house to fix lunch while he helped put it in the stack.

The four of them came into the house dirty, tired, and very hungry. Lunch was ready so they all washed up and sat down to eat. Wade and Read left to go home and Norma went upstairs to take a shower and Sheffield used the one downstairs. The afternoon was spent getting ready to fly to Norfolk the next day for the ship's reunion.

By mid morning on Friday, Sheffield and Ramona took off for Norfolk in the Stagewing. They had offered to take Murry and Maxine with them, but Murry politely declined. "With all due respects, sir" he had said, "that was a part of my life that I have turned my back on. I haven't been Murry Puchesky for a long time now. Besides, no one there would know Murry Austin."

It was a pleasant day for flying with only occasional high clouds. The flight took a little over an hour all together and they landed at the Naval Air Station a little before eleven. He requested that Airman Craig Brason of VA 872 be detailed to service his plane. The request was granted and the order was given.

Knowing that the Stagewing would be in the best hands, they caught a taxi to the Tazewell, where the reunion was being held. After getting checked into their suite, they attended a luncheon of the organizing committee.

Sheffield, with some help from Mace Owen had got the ball rolling, when he was called up for active duty and Mace was sent to Italy, he had to pass it off to someone else. His other former executive officer,

Hank Terry was willing to take it from there. He sought out a few others to help him get organized.

One of the first people he turned to was Morris Gover because he probably knew Captain Brason better than anyone and had a lot of knowledge regarding the Reprisal. He also turned to Senior Chief Xavier Solozar, who had been the ranking enlisted man in the ships company. He had retired from the navy immediately after the war and was living in Virginia Beach, so he was the local point of contact since Hank lived in Idaho and Morris lived in Utah. Hank needed someone with good communication skills and solicited the help of Paul Cameron who had been the Communications officer. He had retired from the Navy after the war with the rank commander and lived in Los Angeles where he worked as an advertising executive.

Working together and corresponding through the mail and long distance telephone calls, they had put the whole thing together. The luncheon was their first face to face meeting in the entire process. Sheffield was invited as a courtesy and listened in as they went over the last minute details that pulled it all together. While he was involved in the discussions, Ramona visited with Sheila Gover, who she knew quite well, Teri Terry who she had met once or twice, and Dorothy Solozar, who she met for the first time.

Some of the details of the reunion consisted of a three day open house aboard the Reprisal, which was still tied up at Pier 7; matinée showings of "Neptune's Realm" at the Granby Theater, only two blocks from the hotel, on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; book signing opportunities on Friday and Saturday with Captain Brason in the hotel lobby, copies of both of his books were available for sale in the hotel gift shop. That evening there would be an informal social event at the hotel with live entertainment and dancing. The main event would be the formal banquet on Saturday evening. There was also plenty of open time in the scheduled of events for the attendees to do what ever they wanted.

In all, three thousand seven hundred forty three former crewman had committed to attend, most of them with their wives or other female companions. The events were also open to the Reprisal's current crew, but about half of them, including Quinn and Sedric , had gone home on leave.

After the luncheon, Sheffield and Ramona had a chance to visit with Morris and Sheila and catch up on things since the last time they had seen each other just over a year earlier when they had flow to Idaho for Craig and Edith's graduation and wedding. They left their two and a half year old daughter with their parents and had planned a ten day vacation around the reunion. Oh and by the way, Shelia was expecting another baby, being five months along.

For Shelia, this was the first time she had ventured beyond the Inter-mountain West. They had plans to visit Washington DC and other points of interest in the area. Sheffield invited them to come and spend the next weekend with them before they flew back to Utah. With a little rearranging of their itinerary, they promised that they would.

For two hours that afternoon, Sheffield greeted former crewmen in the hotel lobby as he signed

their books. Many of them had brought their own copies, others purchased one from the gift shop. The book signings were a last minute addition to the agenda when it was learned that he would be able to attend after all. With Ramona sitting beside him, he visited with the men who had served aboard the Reprisal at one time or another during her ten year career. Many of them had served under him. He listened as they shared their remembrances and stories.

After a couple of hours, he and Ramona went up to their room to rest up and get ready for the evenings social event.

The main ballroom of the Tazewell was crowded with attendees as they visited and reunited with old shipmates. Sheffield, himself saw many of the people that he was close to for the first time in long time. Some of them he hadn't seen since he left the ship after being injured. Many of the senior officers who had served under him were still in the Navy and had gone on to higher ranks and successful careers.

Some were able to be there, like Seymour Whithouse who was now an Admiral himself. Seymour had been the air officer on the Reprisal and the air officer on his staff during the latter end of the war. He was in command of an east coast carrier division based in Norfolk. Others were not able to be there because of their duty assignments, such as Mace Owen. Others had left the navy after the war and went on to successful careers, such as Paul Cameron. Mel Gates had put his experience as the supply officer to good use as the distribution manager for a large retail chain.

Sheffield hadn't seen Wally Bashor since he had been discharged from the hospital. He had been the Reprisal's chief medical officer and was severely injured that day off Salerno in which he received burns over seventy percent of his body. They had come back from the Mediterranean together on the Succor and were both taken to the Bethesda Naval Hospital for treatment. Although he was disfigured and scarred from his injuries, he was teaching at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, located in Baltimore, Maryland.

Seeing all of these men again was a real pleasure and he was pleased at their further successes in life. But perhaps the greatest thrill was seeing Reginald Jackson, his trusted steward. He had put his GI Bill to good use after the war and had graduated with a bachelors degree from the Jackson College for Negro Teachers in Jackson, Mississippi and was teaching science at Jim Hill High School, an all colored high school in Jackson. He was married to a lovely girl and had two little girls.

Sheffield and Ramona stopped by the table where Morris and Sheila were seated along with several of his friends who had made the trip all the way from Utah and and Idaho, including Simeon Ballard. He had seen most of them at Morris' wedding.

And so it went all evening as he got reacquainted with those with whom he had served with during his time on the Reprisal during the war. Many of the men he visited with that evening he had only met for

the first time, despite their connection. As the captain of a ship with a crew of better than three thousand men, it wasn't possible to know all of them. As an Admiral, there was even less contact with the ship's company.

It had been a long busy day since leaving home that morning, so Sheffield and Ramona went up to their suite and retired for the evening. Tomorrow also promised to be a busy, full day.

On Saturday morning, after breakfast, they took a taxi to the base and were dropped off at the Reprisal's gangplank. She had remained at Pier 7 ever since returning from Korea. In honor of the tenth anniversary of her commissioning and in connection with the reunion, she was open to the public. It was another last minute arrangement. Sheffield and Ramona were piped aboard with all the protocol due a flag officer.

Not only did her former crew members come aboard, but so did the general public from the surrounding area. At ten o'clock, there was ceremony to commemorate her ten years of continuous service presided over by Captain Stuart Lawrence, the Reprisal's current commanding officer. In his remarks, he cited the record that the ship had accumulated during the Second World War while serving in the Atlantic and Mediterranean and later in the Pacific and her post war service, including her two combat deployments to Korea.

He then called upon any present who were plank owners, members of the crew when the ship was placed in commission, to stand. Several men, including Sheffield and Morris Gover, stood to the applause of those gathered on the flight deck for the ceremony.

Next, Captain Lawrence asked them to be seated except for Chief Boatswain's Mate Robert Grandmann, who he recognized as the only plank owner to have served aboard the Reprisal continuously during those ten years. Robert had turned eighteen three days after Pearl Harbor and dropped out of high school to enlist in the Navy. Upon completion of his basic training, he was assigned to the Reprisal as a lowly Apprentice Seaman. During those ten years he had worked his way up through the ranks to Chief Petty Officer.

After the ceremony, Sheffield and Ramona and others attended a luncheon hosted by Captain Lawrence in the captain's ward room. As they were leaving the ship, the newly commissioned USS Crown Point had just returned from sea trials and was being moved into position on the other side of Pier 7.

Again that afternoon, Sheffield sat through another book signing that went very much like the one the day before. They were a great way to get acquainted with the men who had served under him in a personal way that wasn't possible at the time.

That evening was the main event with a large formal banquet. Following dinner the names of all those who had been killed in action while attached to the ship were read, followed by a moment of silence.

Then each of the ship's commanding officers, who were present, made a few remarks, in order of their commands. Accordingly, the first to speak was Sheffield.

"Ten years ago this very day, I addressed those of you who served as the original crew as your captain for the first time. Do you remember? I said, 'I expect every one of you to know and understand your duty and then fulfill it. I expect you step up to the plate and do your duty and then some, even in the face of danger and at the peril of your lives. I expect you do what you must at the instant it must be done and do it right. Any later may be too late, there may not be a second chance. '

"You and those of you who came aboard later lived up to that expectation. Every time we went into action, you did what had to be done regardless of the peril. We have just paid tribute to those who gave their all to that end. Because of their sacrifice and your perseverance, we came away with a second chance to come back and fight again and again.

"Whether it was at the Bay of Biscay, in the South Atlantic, the Arctic Ocean, or the Mediterranean; each time we survived to fight another day and we were instrumental in stopping fascist aggression. Whether it was in the South China Sea off Luzon or off the coast of Japan where we were buffeted by the divine wind, we came through victorious against imperialist ambitions and were there when they surrendered in shame. Our gallant ship survived to come back to fight again in the waters off Korea and it is still here and will be wherever needed to seek reprisal on whatever nation or people who may seek to repress freedom.

"The deeds of our ship and her crew have been portrayed in film. I hope by now you have all seen "Neptune's Realm" at least once. I'm pleased to inform you that by the end of the year that the Reprisal will be sailing across the screen again in a new film titled "Mediterranean Summer." What a fitting tribute to a great ship.

"The highlights of my career in the Navy has been to serve aboard her not once, not twice, but three times with you good men. There is no better ship, and there are no better men. You served her well.

"To this day, the letters R P S L are still painted on the end of the flight deck. The practice was outdated then, but I insisted that they remain. I'm pleased that they still remain. True, they stand for Reprisal. But do you remember the meaning that I attributed to them?

"R for responsibility. Your responsibility to your country, the navy, your ship and your shipmates. P for pride. Pride in your country, the navy, your ship and your work. S for solidarity. United as a crew, working together with every man doing his part. We will face the enemy standing together. And lastly, L for loyalty. Loyalty to yourselves, your shipmates, your superior officers, and to this great country of ours. That is the ship's motto.

"For those who have returned to civilian life and those who will one day, let it be our motto. R for

responsibility. Your responsibility to our families and the communities in which we live. P for pride. Pride in the service rendered to our nation and in the an honest days work in our endeavors in life. S for solidarity. Untied in our families, communities, churches, and our nation. L for loyalty. Loyalty to the same.

“May God bless you in all that you do in your lives from this day forward to end of your days. May our service be remembered by our children, grandchildren and to all future generations that when the need arises, they too will step up to the plate and do their duty and then some, even in the face of danger and at the peril of their lives that like our beloved ship, our nation will stand firm and intact for the children, grandchildren and the generations that follow them.”

During the business portion of the evening, the proposal to form the USS Reprisal Association was passed unanimously. Several names were put forth as officers of the association and Paul Cameron was elected as the first president to serve a five year term. It was also decided to convene a reunion every five years, alternating between the east coast and the west coast, with the next reunion to be held on June 7th and 8th, 1957 in Los Angeles.

After dinner, the evening was open for socializing. After visiting into the evening, Sheffield and Ramona retired to their suite. The next morning, they arranged to have breakfast with Craig and attended sacrament meeting with him at the Norfolk Serviceman's Branch. That afternoon they flew home.

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For Sheffield and Ramona's first visit to the The Homestead Resort and the Warm Springs Bathhouses and the history , see New Beginnings Part I Chapter 3.
Jackson College for Negro Teachers became Jackson State University in 1956.

