

Chapter XL

Routine

February 26, 1966 – June 18, 1966

Most of the challenges that Sheffield was faced with were unexpected and came out of the blue. However, the one he found himself dealing with now was one that arose when the missionary qutaos were announced. Up until the last transfer he hadn't had to close any areas.

In discussing the problem with Ramona and his Assistants, he commented, "Although we'll be gaining two lady missionaries next month and can reopen Kahaluu, I see no alternative but to have to close two more areas in the next couple of months.

"I've been giving it some thought and I have an idea how we can put off the inevitable for a little while. Tell me what you think about this. Do you remember how I was going to have Elder Simmons extend his mission by one month? With some strategic planning I can extend one Elder scheduled to go home for one month each month up through July. That would include you, Elder Wren."

Elder Wren replied, "I'd be happy to extend. I think most Elders would."

"What about beyond July?" Ramona asked.

"If we have to, we can request some more extensions in order to put off closing more areas. The only thing that will help is if more lady missionaries and senior couples fill the void. I think we need to pray that they do. I'm confident that no matter what, the work will get done, even if we have to have sets of missionaries cover two areas. This is the Lord's work and he will see to it that it gets done one way or another."

Confident that a way would be opened, Sheffield identified the Elders he wanted to extend and asked them if they would be willing. Every one of them said they would. Sheffield submitted the requests of extensions along with his needs projection report to the Missionary Department in Salt Lake. At the bottom of the report, he added, "Please send sisters and couples when Elders are not available."

After their discussion of future missionaries, that evening it lead Sheffield and Ramona into a discussion of all of the missionaries that had gone home since they had been there. Ramona looked over the list and counted eighty six. Hardly a week went by that they didn't receive at least one wedding announcement. Several times they had been surprised when one showed up at Mililani on their honeymoon.

During the first week in March, they had visitors who they had anticipated. At Christmastime they received a Christmas card from Morris and Sheila Gover. With it was a letter that included their plans for a trip to Hawaii the first part of March.

On Friday the 4th, Sheffield and Ramona met them at the airport and brought them back to Mililani. As they made their way, Morris commented, "I can't believe how much it has changed since I was last here. That was back in September of forty five when we stopped off on our way back to the states. If I remember

right, didn't you and Pat Mason come over.”

“That's right, we did.” Ramona remembered.

“Morris always talked about how much he enjoyed it here that I finally made him bring me.” Sheila said. “Now I see what he meant. Its so beautiful here. Back home in Logan, we still have snow on the ground. When Janet was telling us that she and Jerry were coming over to see you again, I told Morris that I wanted to come too. So we made our plans and here we are. What little I've seen since we got here, I can see why people love it so much. You two are so lucky to have spent so much time here over the years.”

“The only other place I've been that even comes close to it is Rio.” Sheffield added.

“I know.” Sheila said. “He's always talking about it too.”

“Well, do like I did.” Ramona said, “Sheffield was always talking about it so I made him take me there. But in my opinion, there is no place like these islands.”

When they arrived at the mission home, they were shown to the guest room and rested up before dinner. They joined Sheffield and Ramona, and the missionaries around the dining table. Each of them introduced themselves and told where they were from and what their assignment was.

When Elder Lewis introduced himself as the mission secretary, Morris said, “I was the mission secretary in Brazil.”

“In fact,” Sheffield added, “That's part of the reason for how we came to join the church. You see, I first met Morris when we were crossing the equator. I don't know if you know this or not, but in the Navy crossing the equator is a big deal, especially for the first time. You see, those of us who had been across before got to initiate those who hadn't been.

“Some of the men brought this new seaman to me claiming that he had been across the equator before and insisted that he be recognized as such. I asked him for proof, so he went back to his quarters to retrieve his journal. I looked through it and sure enough there was a detailed description of being initiated on the ship that took him to Rio.

“I also noticed something else. I saw a list of the areas that he had served in, and one of them was as the mission secretary. I asked him about his skills and abilities and found them to be just what I needed, so I assigned him to be my personal secretary and assistant. He did such a good job of it that I kept him at my side for the rest of the war. I knew that he was a Mormon but didn't really know what that meant. All I knew was that he and his friends had the same high standards that I always stove to live by.

“Then sometime after he got out of the Navy, we received a wedding announcement from him saying that they were being sealed for eternity in the Logan Temple. You've all heard me tell the story of my first wife, Geannie, looking for a way that we could be together forever and how we stumbled across the temple in Laie, not knowing what it was at the time. After she died, I kept looking for it, and when Ramona and I

were married, we wanted to find whatever it was she was looking for. With some help from Geannie from beyond the veil, when we got his announcement we knew that this was what we were looking for. You all know the rest of the story, and now here we are more than eighteen years later.”

“And to top it all off,” Ramona added, “our youngest daughter married his younger brother.”

That evening after dinner, Sheffield and Ramona sat out on the balcony getting caught up with Morris and Sheila. Their three children were growing up. Abby was fifteen, Maurice was twelve, and Sarah was nine. Morris was now the director of records at Utah State University, and was over all of the university's records.

Sheffield arranged to be free on Saturday so they could show their guests around. On Sunday they took them to church and spent Monday showing them around some more. On Tuesday morning, they said goodbye as Morris and Sheila went off on their own for the rest of their week long vacation. When they parted, Sheffield and Ramona promised to stop off and see them on their way home to Roanoke after their mission.

That gave Sheffield and Ramona the rest of that day before they were off to Kauai on Wednesday for their first conference in March. The next day they went on to Maui. While Sheffield was in the middle of his interviews prior to the meeting, he was interrupted by a phone call from Elder Lewis back at the mission home with an emergency.

Evidently Elder Hamblin in Honauunau of the Kona District had been involved in some sort of an accident. The information was sketchy as it had been relayed through the district leader, to the zone leader, to the office, and finally on to Sheffield. It sounded pretty bad. The message that he got said that Elder Hamblin had been ran over while he and his companion were riding their bikes to an appointment and that he had severe compound fractures on both legs and was taken to Kona Community Hospital by ambulance where he would be in traction for six weeks.

Sheffield called the hospital, but they said that they didn't have anyone by the name of Joseph Hamblin admitted to the hospital. That was confusing, because that was the only hospital in the area. Next he tried calling their apartment but got no answer. He assigned Elder Wren to try to track them down while he finished his interviews.

By the time the meeting started, Elder Wren hadn't been able to find out anything. After the meeting, there was still no word. Worried, Sheffield decided to skip the luncheon and take Ramona and the Assistants and fly on to Kona, where they were to be the next day anyway.

When they landed, Sheffield called the Kaaola's to let them know that they had arrived ahead of schedule. Dick wasn't back from work yet, but Connie came and got them and took them to their home. Naturally, she had no information at all about Elder Hamblin.

They were finally able to contact the zone leaders and Sheffield sent his assistants out with them to see if they could find them. Meanwhile, Sheffield sat down and using a Honauunau branch directory and beginning with the branch president started making telephone calls. No one knew anything about it or where they were. Needless to say, worry mounted as the evening progressed. Search parties were organized from among the branch members and everyone was out looking for Elder Mortensen and Elder Hamblin. All that was found was their bicycles, one of them slightly bent up, neatly secured to a lamp post.

By the next morning, there was still no sign of the missing Elders and the search continued. Sheffield called the authorities to get them involved. There had been no report of a traffic accident involving a bicycle. Another call to Kona Community Hospital revealed Elder Hamblin had indeed been treated for a broken leg and released. At least it wasn't as bad as the initial report had indicated.

As the missionaries were gathering at the Kona Branch meetinghouse for their zone conference, Sheffield was considering canceling the meeting and sending them all out to search for the missing missionaries. He was about to make his announcement when a brand new Cadillac pulled up in front of the meetinghouse. First a distinguished looking gentleman dressed in a suit got out of the the drivers side and came around to the other side and opened the dented front passenger door. He helped Elder Hamblin, with a cast on his left leg, get out of the car. The back door opened and Elder Mortenson got out and retrieved a pair of crutches.

Sheffield rushed out the door to greet them. It was raining, so he escorted them into the building before asking, "What happened? Where have you been?"

With the Gentleman standing beside him, Elder Mortensen answered his question with a question. "Didn't you get my message?"

"Obviously not the correct version of it. Have a seat and tell me what happened."

The two missionaries and the gentleman sat down on the couch and Elder Hamblin explained, "Well, President, we were riding our bikes to an appointment yesterday afternoon. I was following behind Elder Mortensen as Doctor Thomas here was passing us. Just then, two dogs bolted out in front of me and forced me to run into the side of his car."

At that time the gentleman spoke for the first time. He stood and extended his hand to Sheffield and introduced himself, "Hello. I'm Randolph Thomas. Like the young man said, I came upon them on their bicycles and pulled over to pass them. It happened all so fast. The next thing I knew. I saw Elder Hamblin swerve and hit the side of my car. I immediately stopped my car and got out to see if he was alright. As I came around to the other side of the car, he was on the ground. It was obvious that his leg was broken. Since I was on my to the hospital anyway, I helped him into my car, while Elder Mortensen locked up their bikes, and I drove them to the hospital. After having him x-rayed, I set his leg myself and put him in cast.

“Feeling bad for what had happened, I took them home for supper. After dinner, Elder Hamblin was exhausted from the experience and was in pain, so I gave him a mild sedative. Before long he was resting soundly. I didn't want to disturb him so I invited them to spend the night. He'll need to be in the cast for about six weeks and he should be just fine.”

“Thank you Doctor Thomas for looking after them. Its just that we didn't know where they were.”

“I tried calling Elder Baldwin and the zone leaders to tell them were we were. I even called the mission home but it was after hours and no one answered.”

“We're all glad that you're alright. The message I got was that you had compound fractures in both legs and would be in traction for six weeks. Then when the hospital said that you weren't there, we got quite concerned when we couldn't find you. I guess things got mixed up as the message was passed along to me. The reason why you couldn't reach anyone is because they were out looking for you.”

“I'm certainly sorry for any inconvenience.” Doctor Thomas apologized. “I felt the least that I could do was to take care of them myself. When they told me who they were and what they did, I asked them to present their message. I must tell you, my wife and I were very impressed and touched by it and want to learn more.”

“Thank you again, Doctor Thomas. I really appreciate you taking care of Elder Hamblin and looking after them.”

“It was my pleasure. Missus Thomas and I look forward to having them back in our home to continue the discussions. Well, I must be on my way. Good day Elders, Mister Brason.”

With the mystery solved and the perceived crisis over, Sheffield and Ramona and everyone concerned breathed a sigh of relief that it all ended well. The conference went on as scheduled beginning with the interviews. When he talked further with Elder Hamblin, it was obvious that he wouldn't be able to get around on his bicycle in a cast so he made the decision to make an on the spot transfer. Since Elder Baldwin, the district leader, had a car he directed that Edler Hamblin switch places with his companion, Elder Baker. It just so happened that Dr. Thomas lived in that area.

After the conference, Sheffield and Ramona spent the night with the Kaaola's again that night before flying on to Hilo on Saturday for another zone conference and the district conference that evening and the next day.

Since there was no travel scheduled the for the following week, it was devoted to figuring out the next round of transfers. Sheffield had talked to each of the Elders that he wanted to extend and got their agreement and the requests had all been approved by Salt Lake. Those extended included both Elder Wren and Elder Michaels, the Assistants, and Elder Wylie Hendricks who was scheduled to go home on this transfer.

On Wednesday morning of that week Sheffield was able to watch live the launch of Gemini VIII at six forty one a.m. Hawaiian Standard Time. Sheffield was particularly interested in this flight because Astronaut Neil Armstrong was the command pilot. Sheffield knew Armstrong personally, having met him while he was a pilot in VF-51 aboard the Essex in September of 1951. On one mission, Ensign Armstrong's Panther had been hit by anti aircraft fire. He managed to fly to friendly territory before ejecting. When he was returned to the Essex by helicopter, Sheffield summoned him to the bridge so he could congratulate him on making back.

Sheffield took a liking to the young pilot and kept track of his career, even after Sheffield transferred his flag off the Essex. He flew seventy eight combat missions over Korea and went into the Navy Reserve as a Lieutenant Junior Grade in August of 1952 so he could pursue a bachelor's degree in aeronautical engineering, which he received in 1955. He then became a test pilot, flying a number of experimental aircraft including the Bell X-1 and North American X-15. Armstrong resigned his commission in the Navy Reserve in 1960 and was accepted as an astronaut in 1962. This was his first spaceflight.

The objective of this mission was to rendezvous with the Agena Target Vehicle, which successfully achieved orbit unlike the prior attempt, and perform the first ever in flight docking maneuver. Sheffield had to leave to go down to the office before that could take place. He was eager to see the progress of the mission on the news later that night. That's when he learned that mission had gone awry after a successful docking. A software glitch sent the spacecraft into a spin. It took most of the fuel for re-entry to stabilize the capsule. The emergency forced the mission to be aborted, resulting in an emergency landing ten hours and forty one minutes after lift off. The space capsule safely splashed down near Okinawa and the crew and spacecraft were retrieved by a Navy destroyer.

By the end of the week, the transfers had been decided and the notices were sent out. It turned out to be rather involved, affecting twenty eight missionaries, even though only one was going home. In the place of Sister Angel, three lady missionaries arrived on Wednesday. In interviewing them, two of them told pretty much the same story. They had waited for their boyfriends while they served their missions, but as soon as they got home, they had been drafted into the army. They both decided to serve a mission during the two years that they were in the military.

With a net gain of two, Sheffield was able to reopen Kahaluu as planned. By extending Elder Hendricks' mission by one month, his strategic plan delayed the inevitable. Elder Bryant had healed enough that he was able to go back out into the field. In his place, Elder Gregg Fullmer became the Travel Coordinator. Also new to the mission home was Sister Loraine Wheeler.

Now the transfers were over, the rest of the week was taken up with conferences in the Honolulu, Pearl Harbor, and Oahu zones on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. After that, there wasn't any travel

scheduled for the next ten days.

There was a flurry of news from home. Craig wrote to tell them that he and Wade had taken care of the annual round up and that the Magicians didn't make it out of the district tournament, so there would be no berth in the state championships that year. The most interesting piece of news was that Ruth Ann had moved back to Roanoke. She stayed with Emily only long enough to find a place of her own. The relationship was stained, but they could at least start where they were and begin to move forward.

The routine of the mission was quite repetitive month after month, with the exception of the inevitable unexpected circumstances. April proved to be just another typical month, with the exception of a general authority tour of the mission. The round of zone conferences began in Lihue with the Kauai Zone on Wednesday the 9th and ended with the Kona zone and district conferences that weekend. During the interviews with the missionaries, Elder Hamblin reported that his leg was mending and that he could get his cast off in the next couple of weeks.

On Sunday, which happened to be Easter, Sheffield was pleased to see Randolph and Stella Thomas at the Sunday session of the district conference and made a point to talk to them. They were progressing through the discussions and were taking it all very serious.

Dr. Thomas told him, "Through out the years we've encountered the missionaries on a number of occasions and were aware of the Church and the good that it stood for, but we never took it serious. The Lord had to throw a missionary at me to get my attention. I'm sorry that he got a broken leg out of the deal."

To that, Elder Hamblin said, "It was worth it."

After the conference, Sheffield and Romona flew back to Hilo on Sunday afternoon to conduct two special meetings. The two new meetinghouses in Pahoa and Papaikou had recently been completed and at each a meeting was held in which a new branch was organized. They were both small branches with a lot of promise and potential. After each meeting, Sheffield set apart the new presidencies. That evening they stayed with Max and Aloha Mahaulu and flew back to Honolulu the next day.

The monthly routine continued the next week, by working out the transfers. It was always an involved process that went through several iterations before they were confident that they had the right missionaries in the right areas with the right companions. It was always challenging to assign the new missionaries to an area and a companion without knowing them. It was always amazing that everything always worked out the way it was supposed to be.

This time, the real challenge was what to do about Sister Rogerson. She had been with Sister Clark for five months and although Sister Clark could handle her, the relationship was beginning to wear on her. Sheffield felt that something needed to be done in fairness to her. He looked for a seasoned senior companion to put Sister Rogerson with who would have the ability to handle her. In looking over the

possibilities, they all felt that that person would be Sister Loraine Wheeler. It just so happened that she lived at the mission home. In that way, Sheffield could keep a better eye on her. The question was, would it work?

One thing was certain, the extensions were working. Elder Hendricks, who should have gone home on the last transfer, finally went home and Elder Michaels who was to have gone home was staying for one more month. As a result, an area didn't have to be closed. In addition to Sister Rogerson coming to the mission home, Elder Myron Stanley from Henderson, Nevada replaced Elder Lewis as the mission secretary.

To make time for the tour of the mission by Elder Marion G. Romney of the Quorum of the Twelve, the transfers took effect one day earlier, on Tuesday, with the exception of the departure of Elder Hendricks and Sister George and the arrival of Sister Lujuana Evans. Elder Romney, who was in the Islands for stake conference assignments, arrived at the mission home on Tuesday afternoon, after most of the transfer activity had subsided. He spent about two hours meeting with Sheffield in his office. He and Sister Romney were the guests of honor at dinner that evening and had the opportunity to hear the missionaries who were going home report their missions. That night, the Romneys stayed in the guest room.

Early Wednesday morning, Roy took the Brasons, Romneys, the Assistants, and the two missionaries going home to the airport. After seeing Elder Hendricks and Sister George off, the rest boarded the chartered Cessna for the flight to Kona for the first stop on the tour. They meet with the missionaries of the Kona Zone at the Kona Branch meetinghouse. Elder Romney personally interviewed each missionary before meeting with the entire zone where he talked to them and gave them instructions. The meeting was followed by a luncheon provided by the district Relief Society.

Then they were off to Hilo. Their arrival was timed to coincide with the arrival of Sister Evans. Sheffield had arranged for President Galloway, who worked at the airport, to meet her when her flight arrived in Honolulu from the mainland and get her on a flight directly to Hilo.

Sheffield and Ramona met her there and she accompanied them to the Hilo Branch meetinghouse. While elder Romney was interviewing the other missionaries, Sheffield interviewed Sister Evans and welcomed her to the mission and told her of her assignment to Keaau and introduced her to her companion, Sister Harvey. The meeting in Hilo followed the same format as the meeting that morning in Kona. After the luncheon, they accompanied President Mahaulu to Pahoa and Papaikou, each in opposite directions, for Elder Romney to dedicate the new chapels. It was late in the evening when they returned to Hilo where the Romneys and Brasons spent the night with Max and Aloha Mahaulu.

On Thursday they flew to Maui for the morning meeting and on to Kauai for the afternoon meeting. Again, both stops followed the same format as the day before. That night, they stayed with Frank and Olina Alapai.

On Friday morning Roy picked them up at the airport in Honolulu and took them back to Mililani long enough to leave their things and go straight to the Pearl Harbor Stake Center for the morning meeting with the Pearl Harbor Zone, then that afternoon to the Honolulu Tabernacle to meet with the Honolulu Zone. The tour concluded on Saturday morning with the Oahu Zone. With the tour over, Elder Romney, already at the stake center, went right into the Oahu Stake Conference, to which Sheffield and Ramona had been invited to attend. Elder Romney called on Ramona to bear her testimony during the Saturday evening session and Sheffield during the general session on Sunday morning. After the conference and dinner at the Morleys, Sheffield and Ramona drove back to Honolulu, leaving Elder and Sister Romney in Laie where he had other business with the temple, the college, and the cultural center.

Sheffield and Ramona had Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday to regroup before being off again on the 4th of May for conferences in Hilo, Kona, Maui and Kauai, even though they had just been there the week before. While in Kona, Sheffield learned that Elder Hamblin's cast had been removed earlier in the week and that on Saturday, he was going to baptize the Randolph and Stella Thomas.

Touring with a general authority didn't give Sheffield the time that he needed to take with members in the branches and districts. Every evening after meeting with the missionaries, while traveling off the island, was spent with interviews with members for temple recommends, issuing callings, priesthood advancements, or dealing with their problems. After four days of missionary meetings, the rest of Saturday and Sunday was taken up with the Kauai District conference.

When they returned to Mililani on Monday, they finally got to stay put for a week. Conferences, transfers, and more conferences. May was one of those routine months where everything repeated itself, without much excitement in between. Even Sister Rogerson seemed to have matured. Her last transfer seemed to be the right move. Having her around the mission home allowed Sheffield and Ramona to get to know her better and come to appreciate her unique personality.

Even the transfers that month didn't shake things up much. They said goodbye to Elder Michaels and got to meet his parents when they came to get him. In his place, only one new Elder came out. Elder Bowers was the new Assistant. Sheffield decided that Elder Coleman had proved himself in the nearly six months since he had to discipline him and brought him into the office as the mission recorder to replace Elder Edwards. Elder Wren was to have gone home, but had been extended for one month. The strategy was working so far as far in keeping areas open, but it also delayed the opportunities for others to move up.

Other than flying over to Kahului for the Maui District conference on Saturday and Sunday, Sheffield and Ramona had a fairly light schedule over the next couple of weeks. Sheffield used the time to figure out the needs of the mission in terms of missionaries going home and replacing them for his needs projection report. So far his strategy had worked, and their prayers were answered. They were looking at having to

close an area on the next transfer, but he had been notified that there would be two lady missionaries arriving that he had not expected.

On Friday the 3rd, they celebrated Ramona's sixty third birthday by going out to dinner. She received several birthday cards in the mail from family and friends wishing her well. In the one from Harvey and Marcelle, was a note which said that when Paul came for the summer, the first thing he did was to baptize his father and step mother. In the card from Craig and Edith was a note telling all about the annual Brason Memorial Day picnic that they had missed.

Sheffield continued to closely follow the latest developments in the space program. On the morning of Ramona's birthday, he watched a report on the news of the lift off of Gemini IX. It's flight had been delayed by two and half weeks since the Agena Target Vehicle failed to achieve orbit. NASA threw together an adhoc docking vehicle and put into orbit two days earlier. When Gemini IX rendezvoused with it, they found that the shroud over the docking port had failed to open all the way, making docking impossible.

Then two days later, a planned space walk proved much more difficult than expected and after nearly an hour and a half of frustration with the maneuvering backpack, it was canceled. When Gemini IX splashed down in the Atlantic on the 6th, it had been another disappointing mission.

Sheffield also followed the news about the Vietnam War, which had escalated considerably since the United States got involved. The effort being poured into the war was evident in Hawaii as men and material passed as through on their way to Southeast Asia. It wasn't too uncommon for Sheffield to see an aircraft carrier in Pearl Harbor on its way to or coming home from the war. The Oriskany had been there in early June. More than once, one of their former missionaries showed up at that mission home in uniform as they were passing through on their way to Vietnam. Many of them had been drafted into the Army upon returning from their missions. A few had enlisted in one branch of service or another.

During the next week, they had a visit from Hank and Teri Terry who were on vacation. Hank had been Sheffield's executive officer on the Reprisal and still lived in Boise, Idaho. They spent Monday and Tuesday with Sheffield and Ramona. On Monday, they showed them around Honolulu, including a visit to Pearl Harbor. In fact, The carrier Kearsarge was in port at the time on its way to Yankee Station, as the area of operations in the South China Sea was called. On Tuesday they took them up to Laie to the Polynesian Cultural Center and stayed for the luau and the evening show. Having spent time with them, the Terrys got a better appreciation for what Sheffield and Ramona were doing, but like Mace and Pat Owen, they weren't interested in the church. The Owens had actually started the discussions but didn't progress very far.

On Wednesday morning they said goodbye to Hank and Teri as they continued their vacation. As for Sheffield and Ramona, they flew to Lihue and had conferences off the island for the rest of the week, concluding with a district conference in Hilo on Saturday and Sunday.

When they returned, Sheffield had received a letter from Harold Idler from Wendell, Idaho. He was the father of the missionary who a year earlier had made a surprise trip to Hawaii to visit his son. This time he was asking for permission to come so his son could baptize him. Rather than write back, Sheffield called him on the telephone to tell him that he was certainly welcome to come.

When Sheffield and Ramona met them the following Saturday at the Honolulu Tabernacle, he was a completely different person than who they had met the year before. He had completely given up all of his bad habits and was working hard on controlling his language.

The pride on Elder Idler's face was evident as he and his father stepped down into font. A glance at Sister Idler said the same thing. The expression on Harold's face was one of humility as his son pronounced the words of the ordinance and laid him under the water. When he came up out of the water, he obviously had tears in his eyes. Dripping wet, he took his son in his arms for a long embrace. Sheffield and Ramona later learned that it was the first time he had ever hugged his son.

When it came time to confirm him a member of the church, Elder Idler asked President Brason to join he and his companion. After the service, Harold invited Sheffield and Ramona to join them for dinner, as it was on him. It was interesting that with all of the different varieties of fresh seafood available, he ordered steak and a baked potato. Not Sister Idler, she wanted to take advantage of the seafood platter.

Over dinner, Harold told the story of the transformation that had come over him during the last year and how he had come to this point. He said, "Last fall I came down with a case of the shingles that really put me down. I still had forty acres of beans to thrash and couldn't do anything about it. Then one day I heard a commotion out on the road in front of our house. I went to window to see a line of combines and trucks coming up the road. To my surprise they turned into my field and went to work. By the end of the day they had harvested the entire crop."

Denise added, "Harold has always been tough and independent, but that day, I saw tears in his eyes for the first time in my life."

"I just couldn't believe that the neighbors would do that for me. The thing was, every one of them was Mormon, and after all the guff I'd given them all those years. The last one to leave my farm was the Bishop, who I never really liked very well. He said, 'That's the last load Harold.'

"I told him that I didn't know how to thank them. He said not to worry about it. That very night a big wind blew in a rainstorm that would have ruined my crop. Denise said that we had been blessed because Merrill was serving the Lord. I thought a lot about that and decided that maybe she was right and I decided that the Mormons weren't so bad after all.

"Once I got well, I was able to get my fall work done. The ward had a fall harvest social and someone stopped by to invite me. I figured that if they were willing to help me, I could show my gratitude by

going. Every time I went to something like that before, I went with a chip on my shoulder and was always looking to find fault. Because of my gratitude for what they had done, this time I only saw the good in them. They seemed to be interested in me, and nearly every one asked me how Merrill was doing in Hawaii. Because of all the things he said in his letters, I was able to tell them.

“Before, if anyone would of suggested that I invite the missionaries over, I'd of told them where to go in no uncertain terms. But when they said that they were all boys like Merrill and that I could get a feel for what he was doing, I saw it in a whole different light. So I told Denise to invite the Elders over for supper, but that I didn't want them to preach to me. Well they came and they were right, they were just like Merrill.

“Then one Sunday morning while Denise was getting ready for church, I nearly gave her a heart attack when I told her that I thought I'd go with her. Everyone went out of their way to welcome me and through out the winter, one thing led to another and by spring, I found that I actually enjoyed it. Once I got my crops in the next spring, I told Denise that I was wanted the missionaries to come and teach me. I hadn't told her or anyone that I had already decided that I wanted to be baptized.

“The missionaries began teaching me and I kept going to church. I quit smoking and all the other stuff that goes with it and even started paying my tithing. And now here I am tonight, a Mormon and happy to be one. I owe it all to the example that Merrill set for me by telling me what what he was doing over here.”

Thats when Elder Idler told him of the promise that President Brason had made him, that if he worked hard and kept the rules and shared his mission with his father, that he would see him come into the church.

After dinner, Sheffield and Ramona took leave of the Idlers, who had planned to stay a couple more days before going home. It was gratifying to have been part of such a special occasion for the Idler family. After all, thats what it was all about. Thats what they were there for. It wasn't about the routine of conferences and interviews and transfers. Those were only incidental to what was really important; people like Harold Idler, Randolph and Stella Thomas, and the all of the many people throughout the mission who's lives were being affected.

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For Sheffield's encounter with Neil Armstrong, see *New Beginnings: Part III, Chapter 31*.

According to the Church News, Elder Marion G. Romeny was assigned to the Honolulu Stake Conference on April 23rd & 24th, the Oahu Stake on April 30th & May 1st, and the Pearl Harbor Stake May 7th and 8th. His tour of of the mission and his wife traveling with him are conjecture.

Both the Oriskany and the Kearsarge had been at Pearl Harbor at different times during the first part of June 1966.

For the story of Elder Idler, see Chapters 33 and 34