

Chapter LIII

Silver Anniversary

July 22, 1968 – January 22, 1969

When Sheffield and Ramona got home that evening, there was a pile of mail sitting on the kitchen table that Craig had put there for them. After getting unpacked and things put away, they went through their mail, which included a number of wedding announcements from former missionaries. The one that was the most gratifying was the one from Betty Summers and Carl Sherman.

Sister Summers was the one who had snuck off in the middle of the night to see her boyfriend who was in the army, temporarily stationed in Hawaii for some advanced training before shipping out to Vietnam. Sheffield and Ramona found them just in time as they were in the process of making a serious mistake. They did stop them before it got worse, but things had gone too far as it was and Sheffield had to send her home.

A note that accompanied the announcement said that Carl had been discharged from the Army and proposed to her when he returned home. They had done everything that had been asked of them and had repented of their indiscretion and were getting married in the Mesa Temple in September.

One of the first things that required Sheffield's attention when they got home was the next cutting of hay. He got it mowed and raked and left it to dry. A few days later he baled it and on Saturday, Craig, Geoff, and Todd came over and helped haul it in from the field and put it in the stack.

There wasn't a lot going on the rest of July or August, except for Harvey and Marcella came for a visit in August. On Labor they had a much smaller Brason get together than they had at Memorial Day. With the start of the new school year for the kids, Ramona got a new group of children in her primary class, which included Tina. She was the first one who would be turning eight in the class.

With more time on their hands, Sheffield and Ramona enjoyed watching television. When the fall season got underway, there was a new show that they found particularly interesting. It was called "Hawaii Five-O" about Detective Steve McGarrett, a former U.S. naval officer, who was appointed by the Governor to head a special state police task force. Their mission was to intercept international secret agents, criminals, and organized crime syndicates that plagued the Hawaiian Islands. The show was filmed in Honolulu and around Oahu and sometimes elsewhere in the islands. Sheffield and Ramona liked to try to identify where the scenes were shot. Most of the time they recognized the place, but once in a while they weren't sure.

To take up some of her time, Ramona signed up as a volunteer at Lewis Gale Hospital. Her shift was from ten to two every Wednesday. Her duties ranged from manning the information desk to assisting in discharging patients, to making deliveries to patients. Occasionally she was assigned to provide clerical assistance in the business office. The part she enjoyed most was anything that involved interacting with

patients. She was glad that she was retired and didn't have to keep up with all of the advancements in medicine. She was happy to just put on her pink apron and name tag and help out.

Charlie Austin, Geanine's oldest brother, had been in poor health for quite some time. One Monday afternoon toward the end of September, Edith came over to tell Sheffield that her Uncle Charlie had passed away earlier that day at the age of eighty one. The next day, Sheffield and Ramona went to see his widow, Abigale, to pay their respects. The funeral was on Saturday, which was very well attended. It was Charlie who was to have taken over the bank from Senator Austin, but it was a casualty of the depression. He put his business expertise to work in the family lumber business and got it through the depression and helped make it what it had become. Once Stirling, the youngest of the Austin brothers retired, the business continued to thrive in the hands of the next generation.

Sheffield had maintained his interest in the manned space program during the twenty one month hiatus following the tragedy that had killed the three Apollo 1 astronauts. On Friday, October 11th, Sheffield watched the televised launch of Apollo 7 on its eleven day mission. Unlike most of the previous space flights that took place while they were in Hawaii, he was able to watch live as the three man crew lifted off from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Each evening he was sure to watch the news to get updates regarding the mission's progress. This flight was critical as it paved the way for the missions to moon.

Tina celebrated her eighth birthday on Saturday the 12th and Edith had a birthday party with her friends that afternoon, and one in the evening with both sets of her grandparents. Now that she was eight, she looked forward with great eagerness to being baptized. Three weeks later, she was baptized by her father and confirmed the next day in fast and testimony meeting by Craig, with both Sheffield and Stirling standing in.

The long election campaign finally came to an end on Election Day. The campaign had become a three way race for the presidency. Former Vice President Richard Nixon was the Republican candidate, Vice President Hubert Humphrey was the Democrat, and Governor George Wallace of Alabama, also a Democrat, was an independent candidate. After the assassination of Senator Kennedy, Ramona unenthusiastically joined Sheffield in voting for Nixon, as she didn't care for the other two choices.

As they watched the election returns on television that night, it was very close. In fact Sheffield and Ramona, like the rest of the nation went to bed that night not knowing the outcome. It was not until the following morning that the television news networks were able to declare Nixon as the winner. The key states proved to be California, Ohio, and Illinois, all of which Nixon won by three percentage points or less. Had Humphrey carried all three of those states, he would have won the election. It was always relief to have the election over. All of the television, radio, and newspaper ads became tiresome.

Ever since the new stake center had been announced, the entire Virginia West District had looked

forward to the groundbreaking with eager anticipation. There had been a number of fund raising activities, which raised enough money to purchase the property, which was located on five acres at 6311 Wayburn Drive, just four miles north of Two Star Ranch. It was a little more than a mile farther than it was to the existing meetinghouse.

At that time it hadn't been determined who would be attending the new chapel, although there was a great deal of speculation. Both the Roanoke and Salem Branches had become quite large. The Roanoke Branch had well over five hundred members and the Salem Branch had just over four hundred.

Once the property had been secured, more money needed to be raised by the district to meet their share of the cost before construction could begin. After more fund raising activities and donations from the members, they reached their goal. On Saturday November 16th, nearly one hundred church members, including Sheffield and Ramona, gathered at the site for the groundbreaking, which was presided over by President Arthur S. Anderson, the President of Central Atlantic States Mission.

Following a hymn and the invocation, President Anderson had a few remarks. Among other things he said that it was expected that the building would take a little over a year to complete and then it was anticipated that the Virginia West District would become a stake. That news caused each heart to swell with gratitude for the blessing that that would be. Then President Anderson, Lee Bennett the District President, the presidents of the Roanoke and Salem Branches and the members of the district council from the two branches, including Sheffield, each with a shovel that had been spray painted gold, turned over the first shovel full of dirt, symbolically breaking ground. The actual construction work would begin the following Monday.

President Anderson returned to the podium as if to announce the closing hymn and benediction. If their joy in the special occasion wasn't enough, he went on to say. "Since you are all here under threatening skies, braving the elements for the groundbreaking of this new stake center, I shall like to read to you a letter that I have received from the First Presidency that will be read in your sacrament meetings tomorrow.

"It reads, 'To all Priesthood leaders in the Eastern United States. Dear Brethren, The First Presidency is pleased to announce the construction of a temple in Washington DC.'"

Upon hearing that, every heart present burned and eyes welled up with tears. In disbelief and utter amazement they listened as President Anderson read the rest of the letter. "It is our great pleasure to be able to approve erection of a House of the Lord to serve an area in which a temple is so much needed. The new temple will be built on fifty seven acres near near Silver Springs, Maryland and will serve more than two hundred thirty eight thousand members of the Church living east of the Mississippi River. This embraces the largest body of Latter-day Saints not living in reasonable proximity to a temple. The temple will also serve Church Members in Eastern Canada and most of South America.

“Plans for the new temple will proceed as rapidly as possible, beginning with a ground breaking ceremony on Saturday December seventh, nineteen sixty eight. Architectural plans and construction will be handled under the direction of the Church Building Committee.

“Sincerely, your brethren the First Presidency.’ and it is signed David O. McKay, Hugh B. Brown, and N. Eldon Tanner. Over the coming months and years, I expect that we will be called up on to make a sacrifice for this great blessing by contributing to its construction.”

He then went on to announce the closing hymn and benediction for the groundbreaking service, after which everyone went their way rejoicing.

On the way home, Sheffield said, “I can’t think of a better way to celebrate my birthday this year than by attending the ground breaking of our very own temple.”

Since they had spent Thanksgiving with the kids the previous year, they were planning on coming for Christmas. Craig and Edith had Thanksgiving with her family, which left Sheffield and Ramona by themselves. Rather than see them be alone, Walt and Sarah invited them to join them for Thanksgiving that year.

The following weekend, Sheffield and Ramona and Craig's family went up to the cabin to find their Christmas trees, as was their tradition.

With the house all decorated inside and out, Sheffield looked forward to his birthday. The original plan was to fly up in the Staggerwing, but as it got closer, rough weather was in the forecast so they decided to drive up in Sheffield's Buick the day before. They left home around nine o'clock and drove up Interstate 81 through the Shenandoah Valley. The forecast was right, it was quite windy with occasional showers along the way.

They arrived at the Owen's home in Arlington just after noon and Pat had lunch ready. They spent the afternoon and evening visiting with their old friends and stayed the night. The next morning they had breakfast and visited some more before leaving for the ground breaking, which was at eleven o'clock,

They got there plenty early and there where already several people there, braving the cold wind and the threat of rain. They were able to get seats on the isle about half way back. Just before the ceremony was ready to start, President Hugh B. Brown, Elder Ezra Taft Benson, and Elder Paul H. Dunn made their way up the isle, shaking hands on their way to the stand. President Brown remembered Sheffield and Ramona from when he extended the call to preside over the Hawaii Mission to them. He greeted them by name and asked how they were. Next Elder Benson shook their hand. They had meet him many years earlier when he was in Roanoke to dedicate their meetinghouse when it was new, but they didn't expect that he would remember them. And finally, Elder Dunn shook their hands. He remembered them well from his tour of the mission with Elder Lee.

When the service began, thirty five hundred people braved a temperature of thirty five degrees in order to witness the groundbreaking of the Washington Temple by President Hugh B. Brown. President Milan D. Smith, the President of the Washington Stake, who was conducting the service, welcomed everyone and announced the program. After a hymn and a prayer, he turned the time over to President Brown.

President Brown brought the blessings of President McKay. "I have a thrill when I think of the significance of this occasion." President Brown said and expressed hope that the temple would be completed in the next four years. "Today surrounded by friends we shall break the sod and we shall dedicate this spot to our Maker and our God. We express deep appreciation to our Father that times have changed. We are surrounded by our friends. We would like to carry to them the gospel." he said.

President Brown described the sacred nature of the temple and urged all members to conduct their lives so they may be worthy of its blessings. "As we think of the great celebration of people in the great beyond, we can rejoice that we have made a contribution in this life." President Brown said. Then in the cold air, he bowed his head and dedicated the fifty seven acres to the Lord. He asked the blessings of the Lord on the plans for construction so that the work may proceed with all possible haste.

His remarks were followed by Elder Benson, Elder Dunn, and Elder Ronald Barker the Regional Representative to the Twelve. The four who spoke, along with the chairman of the Church Building Department and the local stake presidents, dug into the soil and quickly threw up a heap of dirt. After the benediction, small bags of soil were available as a souvenir for a donation to the temple building fund. At eleven forty five, the service was over, but Sheffield and Ramona lingered a little longer so they could claim their sack of dirt. They walked back to their car and drove back to Roanoke, glad to have been there.

The sun was just setting at five o'clock when they got home. When they walked in the house, Sheffield was nearly startled into a heart attack when several people all shouted "Surprise!" in unison. Craig had put together a surprise seventieth birthday party for him. Not even Ramona knew about it. The guests included Walt and Sarah, Emily and a small number of other close friends. They had all parked in Craig's driveway and walked over. That changed their plans for the evening, so instead they had a pot luck supper, followed by birthday cake and ice cream.

During the weeks leading up to Christmas, Sheffield and Ramona looked forward to having the kids and grandkids come home. They had sent out their Christmas cards earlier and were now receiving greetings in return as cards arrived in the mail nearly every day. One in particular contained some rewarding news. Max and Aloha Mahulu included a note in theirs telling them that the Hilo District had become a stake as of the 15th of December. That was gratifying after all of the effort Sheffield had gone to strengthen the branches on the Big Island. Along with the Christmas cards, they continued to receive wedding

announcements from their former missionaries. By then there were fewer than thirty of their missionaries who were still serving.

On the morning of Saturday the 21st, Sheffield spent the morning parked in front of the television as he watched a real life adventure unfold. At nine minutes before eight, Apollo 8 with three astronauts aboard lifted off from the Kennedy Space Center atop a Saturn V rocket. Television coverage lasted through two orbits of the earth while the astronauts and ground control checked out the spacecraft, including the third stage of Saturn V. Then, southeast of Hawaii, the third stage engines reignited, increasing the spacecraft's velocity to what was referred to as escape velocity, reaching a speed fast enough to escape the gravitational pull of the earth. Apollo 8 was on its way to the moon. With the astronauts on their way, Sheffield went about helping Ramona get things ready for the arrival of the kids and grandkids on Tuesday. In the evening he watched the news for an update on the flight and what else was going on in the world, including the unfolding developments of the pending release of the crew of the USS Pueblo which had been captured by the North Koreans eleven months earlier.

On Sunday morning while getting ready for Priesthood meeting, he turned on the news for an update. Apollo 8 was one hundred thousand miles from earth, on target for reaching the moon. On Monday they put the finishing touches on getting things ready for Christmas, including some last minute shopping. Then that afternoon, Janet called with news that doused their excitement. Wesley had come down with the chickenpox that morning and was running a fever. Andrea was showing signs of getting them too, so they had to cancel their trip at the last minute.

The evening news featured parts of an earlier broadcast from the spacecraft. Sheffield was utterly amazed when they showed pictures of the earth from two hundred seven thousand miles away. Apollo 8 wasn't the only story in the news that night, North Korea had made good on their promise to release the remaining eighty two crewmen of the Pueblo.

On Tuesday morning when Sheffield got up and turned on the television, Apollo 8 was orbiting the moon. It was incredible to think that three human beings from Earth had traveled nearly a quarter of a million miles and were in orbit around another world. The pictures they were sending back of the eerie, desolate moonscape were almost haunting. To think that in the coming months, men would actually be landing on the moon didn't seem as far fetched as it once did.

Late in the afternoon they picked up Norma and Wade and the kids at the airport and brought them home and got them settled. Ramona had made a batch of cinnamon rolls to go with a pot of chili. After their long flight, they were hungry. Craig and Edith and their family came over for dinner as well and they settled into celebrating Christmas Eve according to their family traditions. Except that night there was one exception, their Christmas eve observance included watching a live telecast from the Apollo 8 spacecraft.

during their ninth orbit of the moon.

It began with Astronaut Frank Borman saying, "This is Apollo 8 coming to you live from the moon. We showed you the first a view of the earth as we have been watching it for the past sixteen hours. Now we're switching so we can show the moon that we've been flying over a sixty [nautical] miles altitude.... What we will do now is show you on through to the lunar sunset.

"The moon is a different thing to each of us. I think that each one of us carries his own impressions of what we've seen today. My own impression is that it's a vast, lonely, forbidding type of existence, a great expanse of nothing, that looks rather like clouds and clouds of pumice stone, and it certainly would not appear to be a very inviting place to live or work. Jim, What have you thought about?"

The next voice was that of Astronaut Jim Lovell, who said, "Well, Frank, my thoughts are very similar. The vast loneliness up here of the moon is awe inspiring, and it makes you realize just what you have back on earth."

Frank Borman asked, "Bill, what do you think?"

Astronaut Bill Anders replied, "I think the thing that impressed me the most was the lunar sunrises and sunsets. These in particular bring out the stark nature of the terrain and the long shadows really bring out the relief that is here and is hard to see and is very bright..."

As Apollo 8 moved across the sunlit eastern edge of the moon, the astronauts described what the camera was seeing down on the surface. "I hope that all of you back on Earth can see what we mean when we say that it is a very foreboding horizon, a very dark and unappetizing place." Bowman said.

As the spacecraft approached the line where sunlight met the darkness, Bill Anders said, ""We are now approaching lunar sunset, and for all the people back on Earth, the crew of Apollo 8 have a message that we would like to send to you."

Bill Anders began, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness."

Jim Lovell continued, "And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day."

Frank Borman concluded, "And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land earth; and the

gathering together of the waters called he seas: and God saw that it was good.'

"And from the crew of Apollo 8, we close with good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas – and God bless all of you, all of you on the good Earth."

That ended the transmission from the moon and Walter Cronkite returned and began to give his commentary on the broadcast. Sheffield turned off the television and said to the grandchildren, "I hope that you realize the significance of what you just saw. When I was only five years old, the Wright Brothers flew for the first time at Kitty Hawk. Back then people didn't even have automobiles like we do today. All I ever wanted to do was fly, it was my dream. A dream that came true for me. Back in my early flying days, I would of never in a million years thought that it would be possible for men to fly to the moon. But I always hoped it would be possible. That's why I have been so fascinated with the space program and have followed it. Now that I am seventy years old, here we are, men orbiting the moon and will soon be setting foot on it. If things have come this far in my seventy years, I can't even begin to imagine what you will see when you're my age."

"Now you know who else is up there flying through space right now don't you?" Ramona asked.

"Santa Clause!" Marty exclaimed.

Out of the corner of her eye, Ramona noticed his big sister Teresa sceptically rolling her eyes. Ignoring her, she said, "That's right Marty. I think its time that you scamper off to bed."

After having family prayer together, Craig and Edith took their family home and Wade and Norma took theirs upstairs. It had been a long day of travel for them and they were all very tired. Sleep came easily. Once all was quite, Santa made his visit.

On Christmas morning Norma's kids were up early in anticipation of what treasures awaited them. They came downstairs together and gathered around the tree to open the gifts that they had brought with them. Thirteen year old Teresa's skepticism gave way to her inner child as she happily opened the packages with her name on them.

A little later, Craig and his family came over after they had opened their presents. While Ramona, Edith, and Norma turned their attention to Christmas dinner, Sheffield turned on the radio to listen the hourly news update. He heard what he had tuned in for, Apollo 8 was on their way home and were scheduled to splash down on Friday. A little later in the morning, Ramona called Janet to see how their Christmas was. She reported that all three of the kids had the chicken pox, which dampened their excitement. The rest of the family had a lovely Christmas together, not only on Christmas day but through out the week.

With Sheffield and Ramona's twenty fifth anniversary approaching, the kids had wanted to do something special for them. Sheffield's surprise birthday party was a spur of the moment thing, but Craig,

Norma, and Janet had been planning their anniversary for sometime, since they were all going to be home during the holidays. When it turned out that Janet couldn't come, they went ahead with it as planned since the invitations had already been sent out with their Christmas cards and an announcement, complete with then and now photographs had been printed in the newspaper, both the Roanoke Times and the Times-Register, Salem's weekly paper.

Most couples their age would be approaching their fiftieth, like Walt and Sarah, who celebrated theirs back in September. Their plan was to keep it simple, with an open house at their home on Saturday the 28th, which was only three and half weeks short of their actual anniversary,

During the two days between Christmas and the open house, Norma and Emily worked on the preparations. Rather than having it catered, they did the work themselves. They baked some sheet cakes and made up a big batch of punch. They arranged to borrow some round tables and folding chairs from the meetinghouse, and Emily's sister, Misti, agreed to let them use her crystal serving set and punch bowl.

On Saturday morning, Craig and Wade went and got the tables and chairs and brought them back and put them up. Misti brought her things over and helped them get set up. "Anything for Uncle Sheffield." she said cheerfully.

By early afternoon, everything was ready, well ahead of four o'clock when they could begin expecting guests. While the girls were setting up, Ramona spent the morning at the beauty parlor getting her hair done.

They had already received a number of cards from out of town friends and others who wouldn't be able to attend. The first to arrive were Walt and Sarah, who came a little before four. Others arrived, trickling in at first and then a steady stream of friends, relatives, and neighbors.

Everyone was surprised when Janet walked through the front door. Ramona nearly trampled the other guests to get to her. Practically out of breath, she asked, "Janet, when did you get here?"

By the time she answered Ramona's question, Sheffield, Craig, and Norma had gathered around. "Just now. I rented a car at the airport and drove straight here."

"But what about the kids?" Ramona asked.

"They're at home with Gail. The chickenpox have pretty much ran its course and their doing better now."

"Gosh, what a surprise." Sheffield said. "We weren't expecting you."

"It was a rush trip." Janet responded. "This morning the kids were feeling much better and Gail suggested that she would watch them and that I shouldn't miss your anniversary. Jerry is busy getting ready for the ewes to begin lambing, so Gail said that she would take care of the kids. I hurried and packed my bags and drove down to Salt Lake and got on the next flight to Washington. After a short layover, here I am."

"How long can you stay?" Ramona asked.

"Well since I came all this way, I'm going to stay a few days. I'll probably go back on New Year's Day.

"It's so good to have you here." Craig said. "It just wasn't going to be the same without you."

After fussing over Janet, Sheffield and Ramona turned their attention back to their guests while Janet stashed her suitcase in the guest room and joined the party.

Most people lingered to visit a while, although some made an appearance and only stayed a moment. Nearly all of the Brasons and Austins, including Sheffield's nieces and nephews, came as did old friends like Bill and Marge Casper. As they had done before, Mace and Pat Owen came down from Arlington and Paula and Jacob Messner came over from Norfolk.

About halfway through the open house, Craig, Norma, and Janet each took a moment to pay tribute to their parents, who had taken them in as their own and kept them together as a family, rescuing them from certain separation. After their tributes, Sheffield and Ramona each took a moment to express their appreciation to the kids for hosting the open house and for everyone who came to celebrate with them. They concluded by expressing their love for each other, which they demonstrated with a kiss.

With three days left, they made the most of their time. On Sunday they all attended church and enjoyed a special Sunday dinner together. That evening after Sacrament Meeting, they all crowded into Ramona's bathhouse for an enjoyable soak. In her rush to leave, Janet had forgot to bring her bathing suit and had to make do with one from the spares that Ramona kept on hand.

They had Monday and Tuesday to themselves with no where to go. Janet felt like the odd man out without Jerry and the kids. She did call home and Gail assured her that they were just fine and that Wesley would be able to go back to school on Monday. Relieved that her kids were better, Janet was able to enjoy being home with her family.

On Monday afternoon, Beverly and Olivia were able to get away from their families and came to spend a couple of hours. Neither of them brought their bathing suits either, but they didn't need them for the reunion of the sisterhood in Ramona's bathhouse. The only one missing was Takara. They sat around reminiscing the good old days and laughed at some of their misadventures and the good times they had together and got caught up.

On Tuesday afternoon the entire family went into Roanoke and attended a matinée of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang at the Grandin Theater. That evening they welcomed in 1969 together by playing games and then on New Year's Day Norma and Wade and the kids, and Janet flew home as school started the next day.

The first calf was born about a week before Christmas. By New Years Day there were five. The rest

were born by the end of January. All but two survived. It was always hard to see one die. It was joy to watch them grow. And they grew fast, too. From the time they were born until the round up in the middle of March when they were weaned, they weighed three hundred pounds.

On Wednesday the 22nd of January, Sheffield and Ramona quietly celebrated their actual twenty fifth wedding anniversary by going out to dinner. When they got home, they went out to the bathhouse for a nice long soak. As they sat under the mural of Diamond Head and Waikiki beach, the reminisced of their time in the islands and talked of going back in December of 1971.

The conversation shifted to all that had unfolded in the last twenty five years and before that how life had brought them together.

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For the story of Sister Summers and Private Sherman, see A Growing Family, Chapter 42.

It used to be that Primary classes coincided with the school year and age groups.

Hawaii Five-O first aired on CBS on Friday September 20, 1968

The timing of the ground breaking and the size of the branches is not known. Arthur S. Anderson was the President of Central Atlantic States Mission at that time. Lee Bennett, the district president is fictional.

The Washington DC Temple was announced on November 15, 1968. The letter read by President Anderson is based on an article in the November 23, 1968 edition of the Church News. The ground breaking description is from an article in the December 14, 1968 Church news. Clearing of the land didn't start until May 28, 1971

The account of the Apollo 8 Christmas Eve broadcast came from "Appointment on the Moon" by Richard S. Lewis, pages 460 – 461.

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang was released on December 16, 1968.

