

Chapter LIX

Three Quarters of a Century

March 18, 1973 – September 9, 1974

When it came time for the round up that spring, Sheffield had thought long and hard. He had already cut his small herd in half. He would be turning seventy five on his next birthday and wasn't sure he was up to the idea of another calving season. When it was all over, all he had left were the calves that were born that spring and the horses, as he had decided to sell the rest of his cows. Oh, he still wanted to have a few around, but his plan was to buy a few weaner calves in the spring and pasture them during the summer and finish feeding them out during the winter.

One thing Sheffield never tired of, however, was flying. He wanted to keep flying as long as he could. It continued to be his inspiration for giving patriarchal blessings. Easter was about as late as it gets that spring and that weekend they flew down to Texas to see Harvey and Marcella, who had been up to see them the previous fall. Ramona and Harvey cherished their relationship, as they were the only living relative that each other had. And if it hadn't been for Harvey's longtime friendship with Sheffield, they would have never met.

During the spring, Sheffield had lots of opportunities for flying. On Tuesday the 8th of May, Sheffield and Ramona, Craig and Edith, and Stirling and Mary Ann took off in the Staggerwing and flew to Rexburg for Gean's graduation and wedding. Since Craig and Edith's kids had to go to school, they left Geoff, Todd, and Tina home to fend for themselves, with Geoff in charge.

When they landed in Rexburg, Norma was there to pick them up and bring them home. Things were hectic with both Gean's graduation and wedding to get ready for. Edith did as much as she could from a distance, but a good share of the work had fallen fell to her Aunt Norma.

That evening, they attended her convocation. The next morning, Gean had to be there early to assemble with the rest of the graduates and as a member of the faculty, Wade had to be there early as well. Her parents, both sets of grandparents, and her Aunt Norma went later, but arrived early enough to get some good seats in the Hart Auditorium where the graduation was held.

Presiding at the graduation was Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, who Sheffield and Ramona knew from their mission and again when he was in Roanoke to create the stake. After a number of speakers, the graduates were presented, with one thousand fifteen receiving their associate degrees, including Gean and her soon to be husband.

After the graduation, Elder Petersen mingled with the attendees. As Sheffield and Ramona approached him, he recognized them and greeted them by name. "It's good to see you again Brother and Sister Brason." he said. "I have to tell you," he continued, "I was very pleased when your name was presented to the Twelve to be called as a patriarch. A number of the Brethren knew you and whole heartedly

endorsed your approval.”

“It is certainly humbling.” Sheffield said. Drawing the attention away from himself, he introduced those with him to Elder Petersen. He in turn introduced them to President Henry B. Erying, the President of Ricks College.

During the afternoon, everyone, including Nathan and his family, assembled at Wade and Norma's home for what was to have been a picnic. But as often is the case in Rexburg in May, it was a rather cool and blustery day, so it was held indoors. It was the first opportunity that the family had to meet Nathan's parents, Randal and Susan Betts, and get to acquainted with them.

There was one day for the last minute preparations for the wedding. Then early on Friday morning the 12th, Craig and Edith and Randal and Susan accompanied Gean and Nathan down to Idaho Falls. The rest of them met up with them later at the Temple, where they were joined by Janet and Jerry, who came up from Utah. Once everyone was assembled in the sealing room, Nathan's family, with all of his aunts and uncles and grandparents, out numbered Gean's family. Gean made such a lovely bride as she knelt across the altar from Nathan. After the wedding and pictures, both families gathered at Walker's Café for the wedding luncheon. Then the newlyweds went off on their own for their wedding night.

On Saturday, they left Rexburg and caravanned down to Burley for the reception later that evening. Craig and Edith and Edith's parents drove down in the car that he had bought for Gean. Now that she was married, it was being passed on to Geoff for when he came to school in the fall. Sheffield and Ramona rode down with Norma and Wade, and Janet and Jerry followed behind.

When they got to Burley, they checked into the Ponderosa Inn, just off the interstate. They rested up for a while and changed their clothes and set out to find the Betts Farm. Nathan's directions were clear, “Just go through town and keep going south, when the highway bends through the intersection six miles south of town, make a right and go three quarters of a mile and turn right onto our lane and the house is quarter of a mile off road.” They found it without any trouble.

When they arrived, Randal met them in the driveway and invited them in. Their home was a lovely, one level, brick house surrounded by fields, with an incredible view of the mountains to the southeast. They had an eight hundred eighty acre irrigated farm that grew sugar beets, potatoes, dry beans and wheat. He explained, “My grandfather helped dig the canal and homesteaded the original eighty acres on the north side of the canal when the project was first opened up back in nineteen oh five. My father took over the farm as a young man after my grandfather became ill and had to leave the farm and move into town. Then about the time that Susan and I were married, the ground south of the canal was opened up. I helped my dad clear the sagebrush off four hundred eighty acres. We put in a well and began farming it. We built the house across the driveway were Nathan and Gean will be living. Then about ten years ago we built this house.”

"It certainly is a lovely home." Ramona complimented. "And what a remarkable view."

"Thanks. We really like it here." Susan relied.

"Anyway, a few years ago we bought another half section of ground across the road to the south. It keeps my Dad and I busy. He's sixty five now, but plans to work until Nathan gets his degree. Then Dad will retire and Nathan will take over for him."

"I'm sure this much ground keeps you busy." Craig suggested.

"It sure does. Farming isn't what it used to be. You can't hardly make it on any less ground. In order to stay ahead, you don't work harder, you work smarter. That's why I insisted that if Nathan wanted to farm, he had to get a degree in agribusiness. I'm paying for his education and giving them the old house for his effort."

"Gean seems to like it here." Edith said. "When she went away to college, I was afraid she would end up in Idaho. But her aunts aren't too far way."

"We'll take good care of her." Susan assured her. "We have come to love her as one of our own."

Then Jerry spoke up, "I have a couple of cousins who have farms around here?"

"Oh, really." Randal replied. "Who are they?"

"Gordon and Cleo Buttars."

"Oh sure. I know them. I know Gordon quite well. His farm is just through the mile. Part of our farm borders his. He and my Dad are good friends and we have traded work back and forth, especially when it comes to digging beets."

"I don't know Gordon all that well. He's a good twelve or thirteen years older than me." Jerry said.

"He's about as honest as they come, but he sure is one tough nut to crack. Kind of like my Dad. I guess that's why they get a long so well. He has a son that is the same age as our oldest daughter. He's a fine young man. They'll both be graduating here in a couple weeks will be going off to Ricks this fall. Then I understand he's planning on going on mission. I know his Dad isn't very happy about that."

"I hardly know Cleo at all. Where's his place." Jerry asked

"I really don't know Cleo either, but his place is a couple of miles straight north of here, over by the church. How are you related to them?"

"Their fathers were my mother's brothers. They both moved up here from Utah about the time I was born. That's why I don't know their families that well."

They visited a while longer and got better acquainted. Randal and Susan took their guests out to show them the house where Gean and Nathan would be living. Then Randal showed them around, without getting their nice clothes dirty. He pointed out the shop, grainery, and the potato cellar. Neatly parked next to the shop was all of their farm machinery, four tractors, a big red combine with a twenty four foot header, four

GMC ten wheeler farm trucks with potato beds, and two eight wheelers that he called bobtails, each with a regular dump beds.

Sheffield couldn't help but notice the difference between his fifteen year old Farmall 340 with all of its thirty five horsepower and their brand new International Harvester 1466 with its one hundred twenty five horsepower and a nice comfortable air conditioned, sound proof cab. It was their workhorse for the big jobs. Even their smallest and oldest tractor, a Farmall 560 that they used as a utility tractor, was bigger than his. They also had two other tractors; an International 856, also fitted with an enclosed cab, was their medium duty tractor, capable of most jobs, and a smaller 706 with an open canopy for shade.

Randal pointed out the various fields that could be seen from the yard. The ones closest to the yard had wheel line sprinklers, while some of the more distant fields had center pivots. Sheffield knew airplanes and little about cows, horses and hay, but a farm operation on this scale was new to him.

Then it was time to go to meetinghouse where the reception was being held. Craig and Edith stood in the reception line with the bride and groom and the groom's family. That left the rest of them to mingle with the guests as they came and went. In addition to the extended Betts family, they meet a lot of the members of the Pella Ward, who interestingly enough were pretty much all farmers too.

Too keep busy, Ramona, Norma, Janet, and Mary Ann helped with serving while Sheffield, Craig, Wade, and Stirling visited with the Betts' family, friends, and neighbors. After things wound down, they all pitched in and helped clean up. When it was all put away, the newlyweds were off on their honeymoon, but not before Gean said goodbye to her parents and grandparents. Then they all went back to Ponderosa for the night. On Sunday Morning, Janet and Jerry headed back to Utah and the rest of them drove back to Rexburg. That afternoon they attended church in Norma and Wade's ward and stayed the night. On Monday, they flew back to Roanoke in the Stagewing.

Sheffield and Ramona's lives pretty much revolved around their ten grandchildren. With most of them scattered across the country, sometimes it was impossible to be there for everything that they had going on. But there were just certain things that couldn't be missed, like baptisms, weddings, graduations, and the really big things.

Even though they had just been out west for Gean's graduation and wedding, nine days later Sheffield and Ramona flew across the county again. This time, they had Roger and Chantelle Rowan with them, as Teresa was graduating from Madison High School in Rexburg. They arrived on Tuesday, attended her graduation on Wednesday the 23rd, and flew home on Thursday. But it didn't end there; on Friday the 25th they attended Geoff's graduation from Andrew Lewis High School in Salem.

Later that evening, all the kids flew in from out west for Gean's reception the next day and the extended Brason family reunion on Monday. But Gean and Nathan and Norma and Janet and their families

weren't the only ones on that flight to be picked up. Randal and Susan Betts and their family had also come for the reception as well. In addition, the little Japanese orphan who once claimed the Brason home as her home too had made good on her promise to return someday and she brought her family with her.

Now the question was, where to put everyone. The Betts rented a car and stayed at a nearby motel in Salem. The newlyweds stayed with Craig and Janet and Takara's families stayed with Sheffield and Ramona, While Norma's family stayed with Roger and Chantelle.

Everybody was put to work Saturday morning decorating the cultural hall at the stake center for the reception. With so many to help, it didn't take very long at all. With everything in place, everyone went home to get ready for the reception. That evening, the reception line greeted all of the Brasons' family, friends, and neighbors, and members of the Salem, Roanoke 1st and 2nd Wards.

On Sunday, the Salem Ward was swarmed with visitors as they all went to church together. On Monday morning, the Betts flew back to Idaho, but everyone else stayed and were joined by the extended Brason family for the reunion. Being Memorial Day, the first order of business was a trip to the Roanoke City Cemetery to put out flowers on the graves of their departed loved ones.

Since Sheffield had been busy with a wedding and two graduations to attend, Walt had taken care of most of the arrangements while Sheffield provided the location. By eleven o'clock, the yard was transformed into a parking lot and the stand or trees down by the river was full of people of all ages. It had been five years since their last reunion. Since then, both Walt and Shenan's families had a number of great grandchildren added to them. Naturally, not everyone was able to come, like Anna who now lived in Pueblo, Colorado. She and her husband now had an eighteen month old son. But those who did come, made an impressive sight. Emmett and Ellen would have been proud of such a large posterity. For many of the cousins, this was the first time some of them had seen each other since the last time. There were games and food galore, but mostly love and unity. When it was all over, everyone was looking forward to Memorial Day in 1978. By then the family was certain to be even larger, and unfortunately more far flung.

With the wedding, graduations, and the reunion over, Teancum had to get back to work, Jerry had to go home to tend to the ranch but everyone else stayed for the rest of the week, including Gean, since she and Nathan would be so far away.

Norma and Wade were able to spend some time with their Diet Center business while they were there. The grandkids had a good time with their cousins. Geoff and Teresa were making plans for the fall at Ricks College, and more importantly, Sheffield and Ramona got to spend a whole week with all of the grandchildren.

Takara thoroughly loved being "home". Other than the orphanage back in Japan, the Brasons was the only real home that she knew, until making a home of her own. This was the first time she had been back

since she left to attend the Church College of Hawaii nearly eighteen years before. During all of that time she stayed in touch, particularly with Janet. During the time that Sheffield and Ramona were in Hawaii she had seen a lot of them. Her three children were growing up as Christopher was thirteen, Leilani was eleven, and Omni was eight. Since moving to Utah, she and Janet had spent a lot of time together and their kids, who were fairly close in age, had got to know each other.

While she was there, there was on more reunion, a reunion of the sisterhood. Olivia and Beverly still lived in the general area, and it was arranged that the four of them would get together. On the appointed afternoon they came out to the Two Star Ranch and promptly retired to Ramona's bathhouse and locked the door behind them, as they didn't want anyone barging in on them. Just like the old times, they removed all of their clothes and hung them neatly on the hooks, showered, and climbed into the relaxing, hot water for a nice long soak and conversation, as they revisited the past and caught up on all of the years in between. It was inevitable that one of them brought the story of the bat that sent them all screaming form the bathhouse and how Janet's dad had come running to see what was the matter, only to find four naked teenage girls. When they parted, they hoped that it wouldn't be another eighteen years before they got together again.

On Saturday the 2nd, they threw a big birthday party for Andrea who turned ten that day and Ramona who would turn seventy the next day, and anyone else who's birthday was around that time. Norma had turned forty on the 26th and was virtually overlooked with all that was going on. Wade would be forty four on the 4th, the twin cousins would be eighteen, Geoff on the 19th and Teresa on the 20th, and Todd would be fifteen on the 2nd of July.

As for Norma, she looked so much better after loosing weight. She was very strict in following the maintenance diet and she had kept it off. She was so successful that the Fergusons offered her a job with their company. She was tempted, but didn't want to give up Wade's summers off or her one day a week teaching music at the elementary school.

But it was Ramona who was truly amazing. No one would ever have guessed that she was seventy years old. Not only did she look and feel more like a woman in her mid fifties (with a little help from her hairdresser), but her "gift of youth" had kept her young physiologically as well. Not only that, but she was young at heart. After all, there aren't very many seventy year old women who cruise around in a red sports car with the top down.

On Sunday, the whole family attended church together and on Monday morning they all left for home, with plans of getting together again in August at Granite Creek, and yes Takara was included too.

With everything going on, Sheffield hadn't been able follow much of the latest developments with the space program. He did see on the news on the 14th of May the launch of the Saturn V rocket that boosted an unmanned space station, called Skylab, into earth orbit. Then again on the morning of Geoff's graduation,

he got a chance to watch the launch of the first crew to take up residence in Skylab. Even though it was an exciting new direction for manned space flight, it didn't get the coverage that the moon landings got, except for an occasional mention on the evening news. The Soviet Union had put a similar but smaller Salyut 1 space station into orbit in 1971. The Russians first docking attempt failed, but the second crew spent twenty three days aboard, only to perish during reentry. Salyut 1 re-entered the atmosphere after just under six months in orbit. It was followed by three failed tempts. In comparison, Skylab was a much larger and a more durable space station. When the three man crew returned to earth on the 22nd of June, they had set record of four weeks in space. In late July, a second three man crew took up residence for a two month stay.

Sheffield and Ramona enjoyed the summer; getting away now and then for day trips or an overnigher now and then. Sheffield gave one or two patriarchal blessings a week, on average. Some weeks he didn't do any, once in a while it was more. And Ramona continued volunteering at the hospital one afternoon a week.

She had been helping out in the office a lot lately and had become friends with Mike Spelling, the hospital's public relations director. Each week he had a different story to tell of something or the other that he had done or a place that he had been. One week, he was telling her about his plans to spend a weekend at Cape Hatteras.

"That sounds exciting." Ramona replied, making conversation.

Without warning, he suggested, "Why don't you come with me?"

The invitation caught her completely off guard, "I'm flattered that you would ask me, but you do know that I'm married, don't you?" she said holing up her left hand, displaying her wedding ring.

"So is that a 'no'?" he persisted.

"Thats a definite no, Mike. Look I'm happily married, and besides I'm a good ten or twelve years older than you."

"How old are you anyway?" he asked surprised

"Don't you know that it's impolite to ask a woman her age? But if you must know, I just turned seventy."

"No you're not, are you?"

"I sure am. Do you want to see my drivers license?"

"Gosh. I'm sorry." He apologized. "I thought you were younger than me."

"And how old are you?"

"Fifty eight. Look, I'm sorry." he apologized again. "It's just that you're such a pretty lady. I mean, I should of known." Mike was obviously embarrassed. "Oh look." he said glancing at his watch. "I'm late for a meeting." and he promptly left the office.

When she got home, Sheffield asked, "How was your day?" as he usually did when she got home.

"I got asked to go away for the weekend with a younger man."

"Oh really? So are you going?" he teased.

"Naw, I'd much rather go off somewhere with a more distinguished older gentleman."

"And just who might that be?"

They ended up taking a drive up to Arlington in Ramona's Mustang to see Mace and Pat.

The next week when she went back, she worked the information desk. From then on, Mike avoided her the best he could.

During the last few days of July, they got ready to go to the family reunion out west and to take Geoff to Ricks College. Before he left, he was ordained an Elder by his father. With Geoff leaving, Sheffield lost his home teaching companion, who he had taught well, or at least he hoped that he had. In his place, he would now be going with Todd.

Sheffield and Ramona flew to Clarkston in the Staggerwing on the 1st and spent ten days with Janet and her family before flying to Rexburg for another ten days with Norma. Craig and his family flew to Rexburg in his Bonanza on the Monday the 13th. The next day they got Geoff situated and all set up for school. Later that day Gean and Nathan drove up from Burley. Then on Wednesday, they all set out for Granite Creek where they were joined by Janet and Takara and their families for their annual three day family reunion.

Nathan was only able to stay one night and went home the next afternoon, leaving Gean with her family. He had to get back because the wheat was ready to harvest and they wanted to get it done before he had to be in Moscow before school started after Labor Day. Gean told how Nathan had taught her how to drive the farm trucks so she could help in the harvest.

They all had a good time camping and spent a day in Jackson Hole before packing up and going home on Saturday. On Monday, Craig left Geoff with Norma and Wade and took Gean home and they spent the night with her and Nathan in Burley before flying home on Tuesday because Todd and Tina started school on Wednesday. Sheffield and Ramona stayed a day or two longer and flew to Boise to see Hank and Teri before going home.

Geoff and Teresa's first day of class at Ricks College was Monday the 27th. Gean and Nathan got moved to Moscow in time for school start. Gean was able to count the time she lived with Norma and Wade toward her residency requirements and was able to enroll in classes as well, so she would have something to keep her busy.

Sheffield and Ramona settled back into their routine as September ushered in fall, with all of its glory. The array of fall colors were dimmed by turmoil. It seemed that every night Walter Cronkite delivered

more bad news: scandal in Washington and unrest in the Middle East dominated the news. For one, Vice President Agnew was under investigation for conspiracy, extortion, and bribery while he was the governor of Maryland. An even more far reaching scandal questioned President Nixon's knowledge of or involvement in a cover up to hide evidence regarding a burglary at the Democratic National Headquarters located in the Watergate Building in Washington D.C during the 1972 presidential campaign. And there was the threat of war between Israel and her their Arab neighbors, particularly Egypt and Syria.

After an exhaustive investigation of Vice President Agnew's finances was completed by the Internal Revenue Service, there was enough details about the level of his corruption that could prove embarrassing if they were revealed. As part of deal with the Justice Department, he resigned as Vice President on October 10th.

Now that the nation was without a vice President, Nixon selected the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, Congressman Gerald Ford as his nominee to fill the office. Sheffield found the whole process very interesting, for while he taught government, an amendment to the Constitution had been proposed. After the assassination of President Kennedy, the idea gained support. It was eventually proposed by Congress in 1965 and after a lengthy process it became affective in 1967. Without this amendment, the office would have remained vacant until the next election, just as it had after the assassination of President Kennedy until President Johnson was reelected. The nomination of Representative Ford now had to make its way through a series of confirmation hearings and pass votes in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The final vote occurred on December 6th and he was sworn in that day.

While all of this was taken place, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel on October 6th, which was Yom Kippur, the holiest day in Judaism. The United States sent weapons and aid to Israel, which angered the Arab nations in the region. In response, the oil producing Arab nations raised the price of oil by seventeen percent and put in place an oil embargo that cut their imports of oil to the United States by five percent a month each month until further notice. Although the war only lasted nineteen days and ended in a divisive Israeli victory, the embargo continued.

This action had an immediate affect on the average American as gasoline, which had been around thirty five to thirty eight cents a gallon for the last ten years, began to rise dramatically as the supply began to dwindle. In some places, gas rationing and long lines at gas stations became a way of life. Fortunately, Sheffield had just had his three hundred gallon gas tank out by the barn filled as well as the one next to the hangar for aviation fuel. Like everyone else, Sheffield and Ramona cut back on driving in order to preserve the fuel that they had. This meant consolidating trips to town and leaving the Staggerwing in the hangar more often.

Because of all of this, any plans for getting together with the kids for Thanksgiving were dropped that

year, as the cost of commercial airline tickets rose. About the only good news that Walter Cronkite had to report in early November was the launch of the final Skylab crew for their twelve week stay.

Despite all of the bad news and its consequences, life went on. Craig and Edith and the two kids left at home came over for Thanksgiving dinner and just like always they went up to the cabin to get their Christmas trees and prepared for the Holidays.

On Friday December 7th, Sheffield celebrated his seventy fifth birthday. Craig and his family came over for cake and ice cream and both Janet and Norma called to wish him a happy birthday.

Reflecting over his three quarters of a century, Sheffield said to Ramona, "How'd we get to be so old?"

"Who's we?" she replied, "Have you got a mouse in your pocket? You might think you're old, but I certainly am not old."

Ramona felt bad that they wouldn't be seeing the kids during the holidays. Norma and Janet's families didn't come for Thanksgiving because of the fuel crisis and had plans to celebrate Christmas on their own that year, since they had been home the year before.

Sheffield devised a plan for her to at least see them before Christmas. Geoff got out of school on the 20th, but Craig wouldn't be able to go get him until the 22nd so Sheffield offered to fly out and bring him home. They flew to Janet's on Monday the 17th and stayed for a couple of days and flew to Rexburg on the morning of the 20th and stayed a couple of days with Norma and flew home on Saturday the 22nd. At least they got to see all of grandkids and spend a little time with them.

On Christmas morning, Sheffield and Ramona went over to Craig's to watch them open their gifts. It wasn't the same as when the kids were little. Now, even Tina was thirteen. During the morning, they got a call from Gean, who was spending Christmas with the Betts in Burley.

The day after Christmas, Sheffield and Ramona got a call from Norma. They had just learned that President Lee had passed away. It was very sudden as he was only seventy four and was reportedly in good health. That was young compared to some of the Presidents of the Church.

The following Sunday, it was announced in Sacrament Meeting that earlier in the day that the First Presidency had been reorganized with Spencer W. Kimball, who was next in line, as the President of the Church. He had retained both President Tanner and President Romney as counselors.

1974 began with the unresolved turmoil that had embroiled the old year. The oil embargo still affected life in the United States as gasoline shortages occurred around the nation and the price continued to rise. Watergate wasn't going away either as the scandal deepened.

Despite the turmoil, life went on pretty much as normal. Craig and Edith took Geoff back to school at the end of the second week January. While out west, they flew to Moscow to spend a couple of days with

Gean and Nathan. Sheffield and Ramona celebrated their thirtieth anniversary on the 22nd by taking a drive up through the mountains to soak in the rejuvenating waters of the Jefferson Pools and spent the night.

In early February, Sheffield followed the conclusion of the final Skylab mission as it returned to earth. There were no other manned spaceflights in the works, except for a joint operation with the Soviets, but that was more than two years away. Other than that, a whole new concept was under development that Sheffield found interesting. NASA was developing a reusable spacecraft that would be carried into orbit by a rocket, but would land on runway like an airplane. The first manned tests were still a few years away.

In the spring, Sheffield sold his calves from the previous year and bought several young weaner calves in their place.

By March, the oil embargo ended. By then gasoline had reached the unheard of price of fifty five cents a gallon. But at least the supply was stable once again. Watergate continued to dominate the news. Seven top aids to President Nixon were indicted by a grand jury for their roll in the conspiracy, and came closer to implicating the President himself.

When Ricks College let out in the middle of the last full week in April, Sheffield offered to go get Geoff and bring him home so Craig wouldn't have to take any time off from work. It had worked so well when he and Ramona went to get him at Christmas so they could spend a couple of days with both Janet and Norma that they willing offered to do it again. Anything to have a reason to see the grandkids.

With less than three months until his nineteenth birthday, Geoff wasted no time in making an appointment to meet with Bishop Moncur to start his missionary application. By the middle of May he was ready to meet with President Winder and submit it to Salt Lake.

Leading up to Memorial Day, the weather didn't look too promising, and as predicted it was raining when they went to the cemetery to set out the flowers. Because of the forecast, they planned to go out to eat with Craig and his family rather than try to have a picnic.

Harvey and Marcella came to stay for a couple of days and happened to arrive on Ramona's seventy first birthday. That evening the two couples went out for dinner and were later joined by Craig's family for birthday cake and ice cream.

The real excitement during the first part of June was the anticipation of Geoff receiving his mission call. Everybody had an opinion as to where he would be going. Some thought he would be going to some exotic far off land, like Thailand, others picked various places around the United States. The guesses ran about half and half between a foreign or a stateside mission.

The wait was over exactly one week before his birthday. A big white envelope came in the mail from Salt Lake. He waited to open it until his father came home from work and both sets of his grandparents were there. He even had Gean on the phone.

Nervously he opened it.

“Well?” Craig asked, “Where are you going?”

Geoff read out loud, “Dear Elder Brason: You are hereby called to be a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to labor in the Colorado Denver Mission.

“You are scheduled to enter the Mission Home in Salt Lake City at seventy five East North Temple on Saturday, July twenty seventh, nineteen seventy four.”

He paused and looked around and shouted with excitement, “I’m going to going to Colorado!”

After the excitement of the moment settled down, he went on to read the rest of the short one page letter which was signed by Spencer W. Kimball. The packet also included instructions and an acceptance form that he was fill out and return.

He had just over five weeks before he was to report to the Mission Home. A few days later, he received a letter from his mission president with further instructions and a map of the mission. It was huge and took in all of Colorado except for the southwest corner around Durango and Cortez, Eastern Utah including Moab, Price, and Vernal, the southeast corner of Wyoming, the western two thirds of Nebraska, the western half of Kansas, the Oklahoma panhandle, and a sliver of northeastern New Mexico.

In the time he had, he got outfitted with everything that he needed to take with him. He spent a lot of time with Sheffield talking about what to expect. All though it had been ten years since he left for his mission, so much was still the same and he was able to give Geoff some good counsel and advise.

The time went fast, and on Sunday the 21st of July, Geoff gave his farewell talk in Sacrament Meeting. Because of the distance, his sister nor his aunts and were able to come. But that didn't matter, he would be seeing them soon enough and spend time with them before reporting to the mission home. After the meeting, he was set apart for his mission by President Winder. President Winder instructed the new missionary that from that moment on, he was subject to following the mission rules, and assigned his father to be his companion until he reported to the Mission Home.

Craig and Edith hosted an open house at their home, so his Austin and Brason relatives, and anyone else could wish him well. By the end of the day, he had received close to a thousand dollars in cash donations to go towards his mission.

On Monday morning, Sheffield and Ramona took off in the Staggerwing from the Two Star Ranch with Tina riding with them. Craig and Edith took off from the airport in his Bonanza with Geoff and Todd. They met up with Sheffield over the mountains and set out across the country, with the usual stop in Springfield, Illinios. When they stopped off in McCook, Nebraska for fuel and lunch, Geoff realized that it was part of his mission.

Later in the afternoon, they landed in Rexburg and were met at the airport by Wade in their

Suburban. Also waiting for them was the car that Gean and Geoff had used while attending Ricks College. With all of Geoff's luggage, the back of the Suburban was stuffed, with room for Sheffield, Ramona, and Geoff. Craig and the rest of them followed Wade in the car that he kept there for just such purposes. When they got to Norma's house, Gean and Nathan had already come up from Burley, and Janet and Jerry and their family had drove up from Clarkston.

The next day, Geoff went to the temple for the first time. Craig and Edith took him down to Idaho Falls earlier in the morning. By the time he came into the Creation Room, his sister Gean and her husband, Grandpa and Grandma Brason, Aunt Norma and Uncle Wade, who had been his Bishop at Ricks College, Aunt Janet and Uncle Jerry were all there. It was especially gratifying for Sheffield and Ramona to have all three of their Children and two of their grandchildren all in the temple together. Not to upstage her brother, but later outside of the temple Gean announced that she was expecting in January. The idea that Ramona was going to be a great grandmother brought her to tears.

That afternoon, they all left Rexburg and set out in a caravan for Granite Creek for their annual family reunion and got there late in the afternoon and set up camp. Due to the circumstances, they had it a month early that year. Unfortunately Takara and Teancum weren't able to join them. They had that evening, all day Wednesday and Thursday and part of the day on Friday to enjoy being together. The only downside was that Geoff wasn't able to join them when they went swimming. They broke camp around noon on Friday. Janet and Jerry headed home and the rest of them drove back to Rexburg.

Early the next morning Sheffield and Ramona accompanied Craig and his Family to Salt Lake. Wade had loaned them their Suburban so there would be room for everyone and all of Geoff's luggage. Gean and Nathan followed in their car. At eleven o'clock on Saturday morning, they dropped Geoff off at the Mission Home in Salt Lake and said their goodbyes.

The Mission Home was located on the corner of East North Temple and North State Street, just across the street from the new twenty eight story Church Office Building where Teancum worked. It originally had been an elementary school before becoming the Mission Home in 1971. It would be Geoff's home for the next five days before flying to Denver.

The lobby was crowded with missionaries and their families as they said their goodbyes. It was an emotional scene and everyone had a hug and a goodbye for Geoff. First was Gean. Having already been away from home and now on her own, it wasn't as difficult for her.

"Be sure to send me pictures of my nephew when he's born." Geoff said as he had a hug for his big sister.

"How do you know its going to be a boy?" she asked.

"Alright then, in that case send me a picture of my niece."

Next Nathan shook his hand, "Good luck Elder." he said.

Todd didn't know whether to shake his hand or hug him. Fifteen year old boys didn't hug other guys. After a brief hesitation, he decided to go with the hug. Unexpected emotion came over him as he said goodbye to his big brother. If there was anything Todd wanted to be, it was to be like Geoff. They were close and he would miss him.

Then it was Tina's turn. Twelve year old girls were into both hugs and tears. She bawled profusely as she held on to him as tightly as she could, as if she would never see him again.

"When I see you again," he said, "you'll be all grown up and you'll have so many boys flocking to you that you won't even notice that I'm back."

That brought a smile as a laugh found a place among the sobs.

His Grandmother had a tender hug for him. Even though she understood where it was that he was going and what he would be doing, emotion cracked his voice as she said goodbye.

Geoff went to shake his Grandfather's hand, but Sheffield pulled him in for a hug. "Now remember all of the things that we talked about." he said in reference to the many long conventions that they had.

The longest hug came from his mother as Emily said goodbye, mixed with last minute instructions. "Be sure to keep your apartment clean and don't forget, keep your whites, darks, and coloreds separate when you do your laundry. And be sure to..."

Finally, he came to his father for one last hug. "I envy you." he said. "When I was your age I didn't have the opportunity to go on a mission, so I want you to go out there and serve and work hard enough for the both of us."

Then it came time to let him go. With a big smile on his face, Geoff turned and bounded up the stairs without glancing back. There was nothing left to do, except find someplace to have lunch and go home. At Tremonton, Gean and Nathan turned off for Burley.

On Sunday, they went to church with Wade and Norma, then on Monday, Craig and his family went to spend a few days with Gean in Burley, before flying home. Sheffield and Ramona, however stayed another week with Norma and Wade. During their stay, Wade took them on a day trip through Yellowstone.

At the end of the week, they hopped on down to Clarkston and stayed a week with Janet and her family. While they were there, the big story in the news was the resignation of President Nixon over his involvement in the Watergate cover up. Gerald Ford was promptly sworn in as the thirty eighth President of the United States, the only man to become President without being elected on a presidential ticket. Sheffield and Ramona went to Church with them and flew home on Monday the 12th.

When they got home, they had a letter waiting for them from Geoff telling all about his time at the Mission Home and his flight to Denver. He told them about the mission home in Denver and described the

old mansion that had been built in 1907. His experience was like those that Sheffield and Ramona had been a part of for three years in Hawaii. He had been picked up at the airport and was taken to the mission home. He had an interview with his mission president and was assigned to his first area. He went on to describe the little mountain town of Evergreen just west of Denver.

Towards the end of August, Teresa began her second year at Ricks and all of the rest of the grandkids went back to school as well. After Labor Day, Gean and Nathan returned to Moscow for his last year at the University of Idaho. Wanting to get as far toward her degree as possible, Gean took a full load of classes despite being pregnant. Naturally she wouldn't be able to finish once the baby was born, but there were be other alternatives when the time was right.

* * * * *

The latest possible date for Easter in April 25th, in 1973 Easter fell on the 22nd.
For how Ramona and Harvey figured out their relationship, see the Business of War Chapter 35.

The information on the 1973 Ricks College graduation is from the May 19, 1973 Church News.

The Ponderosa Inn was a nice motel on the north end of Burley, just off the interstate. It has since been torn down.

The Betts are a fictional family, but the farm described is actually the farm that belonged to the Robins, plus a little more. Part of their farm bordered ours. I am the "fine young man" that Randal referred to.

The Salt Lake Mission Home at 75 E North Temple was used until 1978 when the Missionary Training center opened in Provo. It was later torn down and the location is now a parking lot for the Church History Library.

