

Chapter LX To Laugh or Cry

September 10, 1974 – August 28, 1975

Throughout the summer of 1974 as the temple in Washington DC neared completion, it received a great deal of coverage in the press. News articles appeared in newspapers throughout the East and even in national publications like Time Magazine and Newsweek.

Sheffield and Ramona were as excited as anyone for it to be completed. During their three years in Hawaii they attended the Temple in Laie about once a month. Other than that, they attended whenever they went out west to see the girls. The completion of the Temple meant that they could once again attend on a regular basis.

When the dates for the open house were announced, they made plans to attend and take Craig and Edith and their two younger children, who were still at home. Mace and Pat Owen had commented about the new temple and expressed an interest in seeing it.

They picked the first week in October, which happened to be when Todd and Tina were out of school for fall break. On Monday morning, the six of them loaded up in Sheffield's Buick, which was quite roomy, with Tina riding up front and Todd in the backseat with Craig and Edith. They drove up through the Shenandoah Valley on Interstate 81, with a stop at Harrisonburg to stretch their legs. They went as far as Strasburg where they turned off onto Interstate 66, which took them to Arlington.

Pat had lunch waiting for them when they got there. After lunch, they unloaded their luggage and took it to their receptive bedrooms. Todd got the couch in Mace's study. The rest of the afternoon was spent visiting with the Owens.

On Tuesday morning, they all got dressed in their Sunday best up and headed out in two cars, the men in one and the ladies in the other, and set out for the open house. Although it was the longest route to get there, Mace had them take the Capitol Beltway which saved a lot of time over trying to drive through the city.

At one point as they came around a bend, the scene before them was breathtaking. There was the temple looming in the distances, dead ahead. It looked like a white cloud standing out above the brilliant fall colors. It had already become a prominent landmark on the beltway that couldn't be missed.

A few minutes later, they were directed into the parking lot of the nearby visitors' center. As they got out, the temple towered above them. It looked like a modern adaptation of the Salt Lake Temple, with its six spires; three on the east, the tallest of which was topped with a statue of the Angel Moroni, and three on the west.

"Good Lord." Pat exhaled. "That is simply the most beautiful sight I think I have ever seen."

"Just wait until we get inside." Ramona said.

"It's a lot bigger than the Salt Lake Temple." Sheffield observed as he gazed up at it.

They were ushered into the visitor's center for a brief introduction and were assigned to a tour group. As they walked the short distance from the visitor's center to the temple, there was a feeling that they were on sacred ground as they approached. Mace and Pat were keenly aware of the the feeling as it engulfed them.

Before entering the temple, they were given a pair of white booties to slip on over their shoes, then they went through the main entrance on the north side of the temple, which was actually an annex. There was a covered bridge that lead from the annex to the temple itself. The trees and the temple were clearly visible through the windows.

Directly ahead, in the entryway was was a large mural of the second coming of Jesus Christ, depicting the righteous on the right hand of Jesus, welcoming him in joy. Once actually in the temple, the rest of the mural could be seen. It included the wicked on the left hand side of Christ, as if they were hiding from him. The meaning that the painting implied made a particularly strong impression on Pat.

Once inside the temple, they were actually on the second floor. The lobby took up a good share of the floor, which included a chapel and the temple offices. At either end of the lobby was a square staircase with an open center, from which one could look either up or down through all of the floors. Looking down to the first floor, there was a large fountain. Also visible from the staircase were the colorful stained glass windows on each floor.

The tour guide took them downstairs and explained that there was a cafeteria, among other things on the first floor. They went on down another flight of stairs to the baptistery in the basement and subbasement. The font rested on the backs of twelve oxen situated on the floor of the subbasement. On either side of the font, a curved staircase lead to the floor below which was covered with a lovely blue carpet.

The tour took them back up the opposite staircase and up to the third floor. Once on the third floor, a corridor ran east and west, connecting the two staircases. The tour took them past the clothing rental area, into the women's dressing room and the brides room, before going up to the fourth floor.

The tour guide took them through one of the six endowment rooms. Unlike the older temples out west, the entire session took place in just one room, rather than progressing from room to room. The walls were absent of any murals and there was no center isle between the seats. At the front of the room was a white marble altar with pointed arches that matched the theme throughout the temple.

The endowment room lead directly into the oval shaped celestial room that took up the center of both the fourth and fifth floors. There were classic chandeliers around the perimeter of the room between twelve columns. The square columns were uniquely shaped so that their tops flared into pointed arches. The

ceiling was domed with clouds in a blue sky painted on it. Mirrors surrounded the room, giving several reflections due to the curved walls. The Celestial Room was furnished with elegant furniture.

The tour guide allowed them to linger in the Celestial Room. Not a word was spoken, not even a whisper. Mace and Pat were not the only ones who felt the sacredness of that setting, as it also made quite an impression on Todd and Tina as well. For just a brief fleeting moment, Sheffield thought he could feel Geannie's presence.

The tour took them passed the fifth floor, which housed all of the mechanical equipment to the sixth floor which had the sealing office and fourteen sealing rooms, some oval, some rectangular, each with a white marble altar. The guide pointed out the mirrors on either side of the room and the illusion they gave of looking into eternity. As with in other areas of the temple, the guide gave a simple, concise explanation of the purpose of the sealing rooms in an easy to understand way.

The tour concluded on the seventh floor which was taken up by an assembly hall, patterned after the one in the Salt Lake Temple. From there, the group split into smaller groups big enough to fit in the elevators for the trip back to the second floor and back out to the visitors center for refreshments.

While Craig and Edith talked to Todd and Tina about what they had seen and felt, Sheffield and Ramona talked to Mace and Pat about what they had experienced. They were very impressed with what they saw, but even more so by what they felt. It was a feeling that they had felt on other occasions; while visiting with Sheffield and Ramona in Hawaii and during the numerous times they had the missionaries in their home over the years.

"This is the real thing, Isn't Sheffield?" Mace asked. "Everything you've been trying to tell us all along is true. I think I've always known it, but I didn't want to admit it to myself. It meant that I'd have to change. But do you know what, there really isn't all that much I need to change. For as long as I've known you, and thats a what, going on forty years now, you have had an influence on me that has made me a better man. The only excuse I can think of now is that I'm too old to join the church. I should have done it years ago."

"Thats where you're wrong, Mace. You're never too old. Look at my parents. My Dad was seventy eight and Mom was seventy five. You're younger than they were."

"So Sheffield, are you telling me that I've ran out of excuses?" Mace asked.

"Well then Pat, I guess we'd better do something about it this time hadn't we."

With tears in her eyes, Pat admitted, "I want what is here."

"Okay." Mace said, "I guess we know what we need to do, don't we."

From the open house, they all drove back to the Owens. The Brasons stayed as guests of the Owens for a few more days while they did some sightseeing around the nation's capitol. The evening before they went home, the Owens had the missionaries over for dinner and to restart the discussions for what

seemed like the umpteenth time. That very evening, they were the ones to bring up baptism.

The Brasons went home on Friday with plans to return six weeks later to attend the temple dedication. During that time, the Owens followed through with the missionary discussions and committed to baptism. Naturally, they asked their long time friend to perform their baptisms.

Sheffield and Ramona made a second trip to Washington on Saturday, the 16th of November. This time in the Staggerwing. Mace met them at the airport and later that evening, they went to the Arlington Ward meetinghouse for their baptism. There in the same font where he had baptized Phil and Anita Moncur over twenty years earlier, he performed the baptisms of his long time friends, Mason and Patrica Owen. They also both asked him to perform their confirmations as well. He basically gave them each a blessing that was akin to a patriarchal blessing.

Sheffield and Ramona went to church with them on Sunday and spent Monday with them. Then on Tuesday the 19th, they attended together the second dedication session, the first having been that morning in which President Spencer W. Kimball formally dedicated the Washington Temple. Mace and Pat, as newly baptized members of church were eligible to attend. When they left the temple, they had their sights set on returning in one year to receive their own temple blessings.

On Wednesday, Sheffield and Ramona went home, while Craig, Edith, and their two younger children went to Washington with Edith's parents, Stirling and Mary Ann to attend first session on the last day of the dedication. Now that they had their own temple, they looked forward to going back as soon as possible.

Since the kids were coming home for Christmas, Thanksgiving was rather low key. Craig and Edith went to her family and Sheffield and Ramona had Kathryn Barton join them again. The day after Thanksgiving, Sheffield and Ramona and Craig and his family went up to the cabin to spend the night and go hunting for their Christmas tress. By the end of the day on Saturday, they both had their trees up and their homes decorated for Christmas, inside and out.

The next Saturday, Sheffield celebrated his seventy sixth birthday. The next two and a half weeks were spent getting ready for the kids and grandkids to come home. They all arrived on Christmas Eve, except for Gean and Nathan who were spending Christmas with his family. Besides she was less than a month away from having her baby. Also missing was Geoff, but he got to call home for Christmas. He had just been transferred to Colby, Kansas.

Through the Christmas Day festivities, everyone was having an enjoyable time, except for Janet and Jerry. Something terribly serious seemed to be bothering them, although they attempted to not let it show. Later in the day, while the grandkids were involved in playing games and other activities, the adults enjoyed

a soak in Ramona's bathhouse.

The conversation was light hearted as they visited, but Janet seemed distant. Not able to bear it any longer she said, "I hate to dampen the holidays for everyone, but I have some bad news."

That got everyone's attention.

"What is it, Sweetheart?" Ramona asked.

"I don't know where to begin. You know how you've always been after Norma and me to get checked for cancer since Mother died from it."

"I don't like where this is going." Sheffield said as the mood suddenly became somber.

"About ten days ago I felt a lump in my left breast. Actually it was Jerry who felt it first. I checked for myself and sure enough there was something there. I made an appointment with the doctor and two days later I went to see him. He did some tests and took a mammogram. We got the results on Monday and it is most likely cancer. I have an appointment at the University of Utah Hospital for further tests on Monday the sixth."

"Oh Janet." Ramona gasped. "I'm so sorry."

At that, Janet broke into tears. "I'm so scared." she sobbed. "I'll be thirty nine in three and half weeks. Mother died of cancer just three weeks short of her thirty ninth birthday."

"But medicine has come a long ways since then." Ramona consoled. "Besides hers was different. If you've caught it early enough you should be..."

"Cancer is cancer!" Janet cut her off. "Look its me, Janet, were talking about. You know, the one that's jinxed. I'm the only one that bad things happen to in this family. I'm too young to die."

"Lets just take things a step at a time and not get ahead of ourselves here." Sheffield counseled. "Before we get carried away, lets see what they tell you on the sixth. I know this is a frightening prospect and there is reason for concern, but I for one am not ready to start planing your funeral."

"Would you like me to go with you?" Ramona asked.

"Um huh." she sobbed. "I'd like that very much."

"Alright then." Ramona concluded. "When you go home, I'll go with you. Right now, were all together, so lets enjoy the holidays. And might I add, I'm sure these aren't your last."

"Have you had a blessing?" Sheffield asked.

"I gave her one that night when we found out." Jerry said.

"I'd like one from you anyway, Dad."

"Alright." Sheffield said. "I'd be happy to. Can you give me a day or two to prepare for it?"

Janet's revelation couldn't help but cast a shadow over their time together, and that wasn't the last time the subject was brought up. During their time together, they spent a lot of time doing things. Craig and

Edith had to divide their time with the Austins. Likewise, Wade and Norma had to divide their time with the Rowans and to look in on their business interest, which was doing every well. So well that they were considering opening another Diet Center in Lynchburg.

Sheffield gave this blessing the same preparation that he put into giving patriarchal blessings and as promised, two days later, assisted by Jerry, he gave her a powerful blessing. It was not only a blessing of comfort, but it was a blessing of healing. He told her that there would be difficulties and challenges which she would face in the near future, but in the end she would she would be healed and live to know here great grandchildren.

“Thanks Dad, that was a marvelous blessing.” Janet said with tears streaming down her face. “I just hope that I have the faith to realize the blessings.”

“In the nearly five years that I've been a patriarch, I have learned to rely on the Lord for what to say. I assure you that this was His blessing, not mine.”

Janet took courage from the blessing, and when they welcomed in 1975 on New Years Eve, even she looked forward to the new year with optimism. Since the kids had to be back to school on the 2nd, they all had to leave on New Years Day to go home. When they did, Ramona went home with Janet.

On Sunday, which happened to be Fast Sunday, Janet's entire family, both the Brasons and the Govers wherever they were, fasted for Janet. Then on Monday, morning after the kids had gone to school, Janet, Jerry, and Ramona left for Salt Lake. Gail assured her that she would look after the kids when they got home from school.

Janet was nervous when Jerry let her out of the car at the hospital. It was such a large hospital that it was overwhelming. Ramona accompanied her inside while Jerry parked the car. Soon he was at her side as they sat in the waiting room for the University of Utah Cancer Clinic. Her heart sank, when the receptionist called her name.

Sheffield waited all day for word. With the two hour difference in the time zones, it would be evening before he expected to hear anything, especially when the time it took for them to get home was factored in. Every time the telephone rang, he thought for sure that it would be Ramona. Finally just before nine o'clock, it was.

“Hello.” he answered with urgency in his voice.

“Hi Babe. We just got home.”

“So what did she find out?”

“It's cancer alright.”

Sheffield heart sank. “I'm sure it is.” he affirmed.

“The good news is that she caught it before it was too far along and they can treat her successfully.

The bad news is that she will have to have a mastectomy, followed by treatment. She is scheduled for surgery on Thursday.”

“Thursday you say? I'm coming out to join you. I'll just have put off the blessing that I have scheduled. I need to be there with Janet right now.”

“When will you be coming?”

“What's the weather forecast there in Utah?”

“We had a cold front blow through yesterday that brought some snow, but its supposed to be clear and cold for the rest of the week.”

“Let me take care of some things around here tomorrow and I'll fly out in the Staggerwing on Wednesday. How is she?”

“She's been through a lot today and she's exhausted.”

“I understand. Tell her that I'm on my way and that I'll be there on Wednesday.”

Sheffield took care of the things that he needed to do and got the Staggerwing checked out and fueled. When he filed his flight plan, he was about to put McCook, Nebraska down as his second fueling stop. Then a smile came on his face and with a twinkle in his eye, he glanced at the map. He knew better, but instead, he listed Colby, Kansas which was only about sixty five miles south of McCook.

On Thursday morning, Sheffield pulled the plane out of the hangar with the tractor. He stashed his suitcase in the storage compartment and climbed into the cabin. After situating himself, he went through his preflight checklist and started down landing strip into the wind and into the air. Typically, Ramona kept him company on cross country flights, but this time he was alone with his thoughts, many of which were of Janet.

“She had always been such a good girl. It was too bad that she had to go through this after everything else she had been through. He went through the list of all of the various accidents and calamities that she had had throughout her life. “Loosing both of her parents when she was only eleven was a big one. Losing Anthony was another big one. Then there was all of the cuts and scrapes and bruises, some of which she still bore the scars from. But through all of them, she maintained a good attitude. Now she had to deal with this.

“Some people sure seem to have their share of tests and trials while others seem to skip right through life. But you never know what they might be dealing with. Some folks just seem to have a greater capacity to cope with what comes their way. The Lord said that he wouldn't give us anymore than what we're able to bear. Janet must be one of those with a greater capacity to bear them.”

His thoughts drifted and centered on Craig and Norma as well. “All three of them sure turned out good. Not one of them has given us any trouble. I suppose they realized how lucky they were that we were there to take them in rather than being separated from each other. I'm sure blessed to have them. And then

there are all of the grandkids.” He went through each of them and their qualities. How he loved them all.

The time seemed to pass quickly. As he approached Colby, he looked down over what seemed to be a barren wasteland. But after all it was winter. There wasn't any snow on the ground, which revealed the bare ground of the vast farm land. Geoff said that his area took in a pretty big area, including Oakley, which Sheffield had passed to the north of a few minutes earlier.

As he circled around Colby to line up with the runway, he got a good look at the town. Geoff had said that it had a population of about five thousand. It was interesting to see what the area was like, and Geoff would never know that he was there. It was best that way.

Sheffield touched down at Shaltz Field just north of town. Unlike the airport at McCook, it didn't have a snack bar, just a couple of vending machines. Sheffield found something to eat while the Staggerwing was being refueled. He couldn't help but wonder where Geoff was at that very moment and what he was doing.

Once he was back in the air he passed over Goodland, about forty miles west of Colby. He remembered the wild night that they had spent there on one of their early trips out west. He cut across the northeast corner of Colorado and then across Southern Wyoming where the mountains weren't as high. After a while, he landed at the airport in Logan, since there were several inches of snow in Wayne's pasture. Morris was there to meet him and drove him out to Clarkston.

Janet was glad to see him. It meant a lot to her that he would come out to be with her. Things were rather hectic and it wasn't the best time to have surgery, but it rarely works out that way. Jerry was right in the middle of lambing season.

On Thursday morning, Sheffield and Ramona accompanied Janet and Jerry on the trip to Salt Lake. The kids were off to school and would be in good hands with Gail. Wayne and the shepherd would take good care of the sheep. They were the farthest thing from his mind as his main concern now was for Janet.

They drove straight to the hospital and got her checked in. Then it was a waiting game before she would be taken to surgery. While they were waiting, Takara came to see her and to wait with them. A while later Norma surprised them. She had drove all the way down from Rexburg just to be with her.

Laying in bed in only a hospital gown, Janet lifted it up so she could take one last look at her breasts. “Losing my toe was one thing.” she sighed. “But losing one of my boobs, well thats like taking away what makes me a woman.”

“It all depends on how you look at it.” Norma said. “We've both had hysterectomies. Did that make either one of us less of a woman?”

“Good point. I'll try to keep that in mind.”

“This won't change who you are.” Ramona added.

“It'll sure change how I look at myself.” Janet replied, not quite buying what they were telling her.

“But you stand a very good chance of living through it.” Ramona stressed. “Just remember the blessing that your father gave you.”

Finally, Jerry who had been quite spoke up. “Look. When I fell in love with you and married you, it was for eternity. When you weren't able to have any more children of our own, that didn't change how I felt about you. Neither will this. You'll still be the same beautiful girl that I married.”

“It won't matter that I'll be lopsided?”

“Not in the least.”

She looked under her gown again and said, “I can't even imagine what it will be like for it to be gone. You better come around and have one last good look for yourself.”

“I don't need to.” Jerry said. “I look at it this way, in the resurrection everything will be made whole again.”

“I'm not sure I want to wait that long.”

“I mean, you'll even have your big tow again.”

“I haven't had it for so long, I hardly remember having it.”

“With time, this will be the same way.” Norma added.

“Yeah, but when I look in the mirror, my big toe isn't staring back at me like this will.”

“The way I see it, “ Sheffield said, “is that you have a choice. You can remain whole and let the cancer eat you alive like it did Samantha, or you can have it removed and live a long, long time. Now do you want Wesley, Andrea, and Pearl to have to watch their mother die like you watched yours. You asked me for a blessing and I gave you one. Those promises will be fulfilled but the choice is yours.”

Janet paused. “I guess I'm just feeling a little sorry for myself. You're all right. But it won't be easy.”

“Thats alright. We're not telling you that it'll be easy. We're telling you that it will all be worth it. And we'll all be here for you.” Ramona concluded.

She had no sooner said that, when they came for Janet and took her away. Since they had a long wait ahead of them, Sheffield and Ramona took Jerry, Norma, and Takara to the cafeteria and bought their lunch. Then they waited.

After a very long wait, the doctor brought them encouraging news. He was confident that they had removed all of the cancerous tissue. It was early enough in its progression that it hadn't spread and he expected her to make a full recovery.

That was a relief. They still had to wait a while longer before they could see her. When they did, she was still groggy from the anesthesia and terribly incoherent. Her entire chest was completely wrapped in bandaging and she had an IV in her arm. Her first words to them were, “I'm sure glad to see you all.”

“The doctor assured us that they got it all and that you should recover completely.” Ramona

encouraged.

“It will never be completely.” Janet replied. “They cut off part of my body that I'll never get back.”

“Don't look at it that way. They saved your life.”

“Oh yeah.” Janet tried to smile. “I'll try to remember that.”

It was obvious that she would require a tremendous amount of emotional healing as well.

When she was fully alert and coherent, the doctor came back and explained to her what he had told her family earlier. He went on to say that he had her on antibiotics to guard against infection. He also told her that he wanted to treat her with a high dose synthetic estrogen for the next several weeks just to make sure.

Her family remained at her side the rest of the afternoon. By then it was too late for Norman to go home, so Takara invited her to spend the night with her at their home in Bountiful. Sheffield and Ramona remained at her side until late into the evening and then spent the night with Debra and Chet Mayfield, while Jerry stayed with one of his sisters who lived in Salt Lake.

Janet remained in the hospital over the weekend. Her husband and parents stayed with her as much as possible. It was a comfort for her to have them with her as they reassured her that everything would be fine. With each day she felt stronger physically but she struggled emotionally.

When it came time to look at herself in the mirror. Ramona was at her side. The sight was ghastly. Where her breast had been, a flap of skin was stitched into place. The sight was enough to bring her to tears. Ramona just held her and let her cry, that was what she needed the most then.

Once she had drained all of her tears, Ramona assured her that the scar would heal. “I understand they're getting pretty good at reconstructive surgery.”

“I know.” Janet said. “That was an option that we talked about upfront. But our insurance won't cover it. They deem it unnecessary. They did show me some prosthetics that I can wear so I at least look balanced in my clothes.”

By Monday she was getting anxious to go home. While the kids were at school on Monday, Wayne and Gail came to see her and assured her that the kids were fine and missed her. They only stayed a little while and turned around and went back home.

Each day Jerry and Sheffield and Ramona remained with her and finally on Thursday, she was discharged to go home. When the kids got home, they wanted to hug her, naturally. But she was still quite tender and had to be careful with hugs. Being home in her familiar surroundings was some of the best therapy she could have.

The estrogen treatments were having some side effects. Nausea and vomiting made her feel like she had a good case of the flu. It made her tired and gave her a terrible headache and made her achy all

over and she was tired all of the time.

"I think I'd rather have let the cancer kill me." Janet said. "Because I feel like I'm going to die any way."

In addition to making her sick, here skin and the whites of her eyes turned yellow from jaundice and she was retaining fluids which caused her to be swollen.

Jerry wasn't able to spend every minute with her as things on the ranch were very busy and required his attention. Her mother and mother in law were right there with her, taking care of her, the house, and the kids. Sheffield made himself useful doing what he could to help Jerry. After all he had cows, sheep weren't much different except he found them easier to handle.

While there, they got a call from Craig. He wanted to check up on his little sister and to tell them that Gean had her baby on the 17th and both were doing well. They had a little boy who they named Dwayne. Edith had flown to Moscow to be with her. He assured them that he was looking after their place and everything was in order.

It was rare that Sheffield and Ramona got celebrate Janet's birthday with her. Even though she was too sick to really enjoy it, they had a low key thirty ninth birthday party for her. It was a celebration of the fact that she would have many more birthdays.

A week after Janet came home from the hospital, it was decided that Sheffield would fly home and Ramona would stay to nurse her back to health and help with the kids. Their thirty first anniversary was also a low key affair and Sheffield flew home the next day.

Over the next few weeks, Ramona kept him informed as to Janet's progress. There were days when she did better than others. After two weeks, Ramona took her back to Salt Lake to see the doctor. He removed the stitches and reported that she was healing as he had expected and there was no sign of infection. But he did want her to stay on the synthetic estrogen treatment for three more weeks. It had however produced another expected side effect, her hair was thinning.

Sheffield got caught up on the patriarchal blessings that he had to postpone while he was away. Being all alone for that long, he got kind of lonely. It helped that Craig and Edith had him over for dinner nearly every evening.

After the three weeks was up, the doctor declared her completely cancer free and took her off the synthetic estrogen and she began feeling better right away. So much so, that she was able to function again. She hadn't got used to the sight of herself in the mirror, but with her clothes on, the prosthetic made her look complete. Jerry was very supportive of her which made her feel better about herself.

Since she was no longer needed, she had Sheffield come and get her. He flew out in the Staggewing on Thursday the 20th of February and spent the weekend in Clakrston. Since they were already

out west, Ramona wanted to see her new great grandson and had Sheffield take her to Moscow. Nathan met them at the airport in nearby Pullman and brought them to their tiny apartment. They obviously didn't have room for them to stay, so they got a motel room for the night. Little Dwayne was just over six weeks old and big enough to go out, so Sheffield treated them to dinner. Nathan was on track to graduate in the spring and they were anxious to move back into their home on the farm. The next day Sheffield and Ramona flew to Rexburg and spent a week with Norma's family before going home.

Ramona was glad to be home and Sheffield was glad to have her home. After all she had been away for several weeks. Life settled down and got back into a routine. In the middle of March, Sheffield sold his calves and bought a new bunch.

Craig was released from the Bishopric along with Bishop Moncur in March after serving for just over five years. With all of the involvement with Janet, Sheffield and Ramona hadn't made it back to Washington to attend the new temple, although they did go while they were out west. They flew up in the Staggerwing and landed at the College Park Airport, which was near where they lived when they were first married. A ten mile taxi ride got them to the temple and back to the airport and they flew home in the afternoon. It was wonderful to be able to attend the temple and return the same day. Having a plane made it much easier, although it could be done by driving three hours and forty minutes each way.

In the middle of April, Sheffield and Ramona attended a funeral for Winslow Austin, who died on April 10th. He was eighty five. That left Edith's father, Stirling, the only surviving Austin brother. At seventy nine, he was in pretty good health for his age.

Age was taking its toll on Sheffield's brother Walt at seventy nine. Like their father, Walt had Parkinson's, although it didn't come on as early as it did with Emmett. Sarah, who was a few weeks older than Sheffield was in good physical health, but was getting quite forgetful, mostly when it came to short term memory.

But it was Harvey who at seventy five was in a bad way. He suffered a stroke in the spring that left him pretty much incapacitated, leaving Marcella, who was only sixty four to care for him. Ramona wanted to go see him, but had been so busy taking care of Janet, that she hadn't had the chance.

On Monday the 21st of April Sheffield and Ramona made another trip out west, this time to attend Teresa's graduation from Ricks College. Roger and Chantelle went along with them since she was their granddaughter too. On the flight over, the temptation to refuel in Colby was a mute point since Geoff had been transferred to Montrose, Colorado.

While in Rexburg, Sheffield and Ramona stayed with Norma and Wade while the Rowans stayed with Chantelle's sister who lived on the hill in Rexburg. The graduation was on the 23rd followed by a get together at Wade and Norma's home. It was a cool and blustery day, so the festivities were held inside. Now

that she had her associates degree, Teresa was going to BYU in the fall.

Sheffield and Ramona left Roger and Chantelle in Rexburg for a couple of days while they made a quick trip down to see Janet. She was doing much better and had regained a good share of her strength, although she had a ways to go. She looked great. Someone who didn't know any different wouldn't know that she wore a false breast. She stripped down to the waist to show Ramona how the scar on her chest had healed, but it was obvious that the emotional scar hadn't healed as well. Despite all of the encouragement that she received from Jerry and everyone else, she still felt incomplete as a woman. However the short visit did cheer her up and she looked forward to a nice long visit from her parents later in the summer.

After seeing Janet, Sheffield and Ramona returned to Rexburg and on Saturday, they and the Rowans flew home.

After spending three weeks at home, Sheffield took Ramona to see Harvey during the third week of May. Poor Harvey was in a bad way. The stroke had severely limited his ability to speak and move. He had always been so robust and energetic, so being incapacitated took its toll on him emotionally as well. At times his frustration turned to anger. Despite his condition, he was happy to see his long time friend and his only cousin.

Marcella had to pretty much take care of his every need, and it was wearing on her too. Joseph and especially Rhonda were a big help. But Harvey's younger son, Francis, lived in California and only had limited contact since he had long ago aligned himself with Harvey's ex-wife. As for Winnie, she too was in California but only contacted them when she needed money or was in trouble. It seemed that she was always in trouble of some kind. She was a drug addict and had in been in and out jail. She had been pregnant twice, that they knew of, but had now idea of what became of the babies. They suspected that she had had at least one abortion.

Anna and her family lived ten and a half hours away in Pueblo, Colorado and came a couple of times a year to see her father and grandfather. She only made it home to Roanoke, which was much farther maybe once a year. Paul was a first lieutenant in the Air Force and was currently stationed in San Antonio, Texas which was only three and half hours away, so he came home as often as he could.

Sheffield and Ramona had a good visit, but when they left to fly home Ramona felt in her heart that it was the last time she that would see her cousin. The next time they came, it would be for his funeral.

At the end of May, Craig and Edith invited Sheffield and Ramona to accompany them to Moscow for Nathan's Graduation from the University of Idaho. They had been gone so much recently that they declined the invitation but sent their love. Since Craig and Edith stayed through Memorial Day to help them move back into their home in Burley, Sheffield and Ramona looked in on Todd and Tina, who had also remained behind since they had a few days of school left.

Ramona celebrated her seventy second birthday on the 3rd of June. Then later that week they were off again. Sheffield had been invited by the Navy to attend the decommissioning ceremony for the Reprisal. On Thursday they drove to Norfolk and stayed with Paula and Jacob Messner. On Friday, Sheffield and Ramona had one last tour of his old ship, which had just returned from her last deployment in the Mediterranean. That night, they attended a banquet in which several of her former commanding officers were the guests of honor, Sheffield having been her first.

The decommissioning ceremony took place on Saturday the 7th, the thirty third anniversary of her commissioning. During all those years she remained in continuous commission, but now was deemed obsolete compared to the brand new nuclear powered Nimitz that had been commissioned just a month earlier. The gigantic Nimitz, tied up on the other side of the pier, dwarfed the Reprisal, which she was replacing. Interestingly, The Reprisal was tied up at Pier 7 in the exact location that she was the day she was commissioned.

During the ceremony, the Reprisal's outstanding record was cited, including her service in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Pacific theaters during World War 2, two deployments to Korea during that war, and one deployment to Vietnam. Even thirty three years later, the name Sheffield Brason was highly regarded by her officers and crew. He was proud to have been associated with such a grand ship. After being decommissioned, she was to be towed to Philadelphia to be placed in the reserve fleet in the event that duty should call once more. The ceremony concluded with a fly over by the F8 Crusaders and A4 Shyhawks from her air group as they bid farewell. Following the ceremony, Sheffield and the other former commanding officers were given a tour of Nimitz. Sheffield was very impressed with the new carrier.

Except for a couple of trips to the temple in Washington, the rest of the June, all of July, and the first part of August was spent at home in anticipation of going out west to spend time with Norma and Janet later in August. Todd turned seventeen on the 2nd of July and would be a senior in the fall. In seeking direction for making his plans for after graduating in the spring, he received his patriarchal blessing from his grandfather. If there was one thing that Todd wanted to be, it was to be Geoff. He idolized his brother and wanted to be just like him. In many ways, he did better than Geoff had. His immediate plans called for attending Ricks College and serve a mission.

After a long dry spell in the manned space program, Sheffield followed the Apollo-Soyuz mission in mid July. Because of the historic nature of the joint U.S./Soviet venture, the mission received a great deal of attention in the media. Sheffield watched the launch of the Apollo spacecraft, which was put into earth orbit by a Saturn 1B rocket on Tuesday July 15th. Once in orbit, the spacecraft retrieved the docking adapter in the same way that the earlier lunar missions had docked with the lunar module.

The Soyuz spacecraft, which had been launched seven and a half hours before the the Apollo

spacecraft rendezvoused with the Americans two days later and docked. Three hours later the hatch was opened and the historic handshake between the American and Soviet commanders was televised to both nations.

While the two ships were docked, the three Americans and two Russians conducted joint scientific experiments, exchanged flags and gifts, signed certificates, visited each other's ships, ate together, and conversed in each other's languages. After forty four hours together, the two ships separated and went their separate ways. The Soviets returned to earth on the 21st and the Americans on the 24th. During reentry, the American astronauts were exposed to toxic fumes. After being recovered, they had to spend two weeks in the hospital.

Then on the evening of Thursday, July 30th, Ramona got a call from Marcella. Harvey had suffered another serious stroke the day before and had passed away that afternoon at Texoma Medical Center in Denison. He was seventy five. She said that his funeral was the following Tuesday and she asked Sheffield to speak at his funeral.

The unscheduled trip altered Sheffield and Ramona's vacation plans slightly. This new development meant that they would leave a week earlier and be gone longer than originally planned.

They took off in the Staggerwing from the Two Star Ranch on Monday morning and flew to the Morrison Ranch in Denison and landed on Harvey's makeshift landing strip in the pasture as they had done on many occasions over the years. Joseph met them and helped them bring in their luggage and put it in the guest room.

That evening Sheffield and Ramona attended the viewing with the family at the funeral home in Denison. Paul had gotten a furlough from the Air Force and Anna and her family had driven down from Pueblo. Harvey's youngest son, Francis and his family, were there as well, but there wasn't any way of contacting Winnie. That was pretty much all of Harvey's family. There was a good showing from the community where Harvey was known and respected.

The funeral was held the next day at the LDS meetinghouse in Sherman. Again there was a good turn out from the community. The service lasted about an hour, with Sheffield taking about fifteen minutes of the time. He talked about their common love of flying and how it had forged their friendship early on through a chance encounter. Their friendship grew deeper as through the years their paths kept crossing, only to discover that he and Ramona were long lost cousins.

From then on, they were more than friends, they were family. He went on to talk about the eternal nature of families. His remarks struck a cord with Francis who felt remorseful for his estrangement from his father for all of those years. For him that was the first time he had ever heard of such a thing and wanted to know more. After the service, things were held just a little bit backwards as the Relief Society hosted the

luncheon before going to the cemetery. Finally, Harvey was laid to rest in the little family cemetery under the old black walnut tree at the ranch where his father, mother, grandparents, and younger sister were buried.

Knowing that there wouldn't be much of a reason to return in the future, Ramona wanted to spend Wednesday across the Red River over in Oklahoma revisiting the place of her early childhood. One of the places she wanted to go for sure was the Choctaw burial grounds where her beloved Great Grandfather Tombi was buried next to her Great Grandmother Opah, along with her Grandmother Tullula. The cemetery had been neglected for years and was overrun by tumble weeds. The fence was in terrible disrepair and many of the wooden headstones had either toppled over or had deteriorated to the point where they were no longer legible. Even many of the stone markers, like Tombi's, were badly weathered. Other than her father, mother, and baby brother, they were the only family she had known, until she met Harvey. And now he was gone too. It reminded her of the orphan that she was. That's why she connected with Takara when she first came to live with them.

On Thursday Sheffield and Ramona left Denison and flew to Clarkston to see Janet a few days earlier than planned. They had to stop for fuel in Pueblo, that Anna had told them so much about, before continuing on. Sheffield had charted their course to take them south of the high peaks of the Central Colorado Rockies, although they did encounter some pretty impressive mountains. This path took them near Montrose where Geoff was, so he took a detour to fly over the town.

When they landed in the pasture next to Wayne's house, Janet and the kids were there waiting for them and took them home where she had some lemonade and cookies ready. After putting their luggage away, Janet sat down with Sheffield and Ramona on the porch to visit. Andrea and Pearl were busy making dolls from hollyhocks and Wesley was with Jerry up on the range and would be home later in the afternoon.

"This lemonade sure hits the spot." Sheffield commented after taking a sip.

Ramona, on the other hand got right to the point. "So Janet, how are you doing?"

"Pretty good." Janet replied. "It's been seven months now and I feel pretty good. I have my strength back and my hair has thickened up."

"I like what you've done with it."

"Thanks. I was going for the Farrah Fawcett look, but my hair doesn't have the body for it."

"Well I think it looks nice. Don't you Sheffield?"

"You're as beautiful as ever, Sweetheart."

"Well, if you don't mind me saying so, you look terrific. To look at you, no one would ever know."

"I'm getting used to it. Any more I hardly know it's there once I get dressed. But I'm always self-conscious about it. I worry about being lopsided or it slipping out or something. It's like I go around with a big bullseye on my chest saying to the world, 'Look at my fake boob!'."

"Oh I'm sure that's not the case." Ramona reassured her.

"Then sometimes when I look at myself in the mirror when I get undressed, I still feel incomplete. But then I just remind myself that I am alive and healthy and have my family and I get after myself for feeling sorry for myself. I really don't have anything to be sorry for."

"That's a great attitude." Sheffield said. "I'm proud of you."

"I'm sorry, but I have to ask." Ramona apologized. "But what does it feel like?"

"You can touch it if you want."

Sheffield's face turned red and had to turn his head as Ramona put her hand over Janet's prosthetic. "It feels real. Firm but still a little spongy."

"So how's Jerry?" Sheffield asked, hoping to change the subject.

They went on to talk about other things and by supper time, Jerry and Wesley came home and they all sat down to eat.

They stayed the rest of that week and all of the next with Janet. They took the kids to Lagoon and spent a couple of days in Salt Lake taking in the attractions, doing some school shopping, and stopped in to see Takara. The big city had so much more to offer than Logan and it was only a little more than an hour and a half away. Even for Sheffield and Ramona, Salt Lake was a big city with a population of over a half million, including all of Salt Lake County, which was about the same size as Richmond and the surrounding area. Whereas, the cities of Roanoke, Salem, and Roanoke County combined had a population of less than two hundred thousand.

While there Sheffield and Ramona had a good visit with Morris and Sheila and Wayne and Gail as well when they all got together for a picnic up on the range. Mostly they just enjoyed being with Janet and her family. They didn't necessarily have anywhere to go or anything to do.

Then on Monday the 18th Sheffield and Ramona left Clarkston and flew on up to Rexburg to spend time with Norma and her family. The next day, Craig and Edith and their kids arrived as well. On Wednesday they headed over to Granite Creek where they met up with Janet's family, Gean and her little family, and Takara and her family for their annual family reunion. Little Dwayne was seven months old and was the center of attention as his grandmother, great aunts, and great grandmother all fussed over him.

This family reunion was typical of the other years that they had met there; camping, hiking, spending a day in Jackson, and of course, swimming. The whole family went up to the pool together, all twenty five of them, counting Takara's family. The pool was already somewhat crowded when they got there. Naturally the kids were the first ones to get in, followed by the adults.

When Janet jumped into the pool, unbeknown to her, her prosthetic popped out of her swimming suit and bobbed to the surface. Takara's youngest son, Omni who was ten, innocently fished it out of the water

and held it up for everyone to see and asked in a loud voice, "Hey, what's this."

Just as innocently, nine year old Pearl answered, "Oh that's just my Mom's fake boob."

The whole family went silent. Knowing Janet's sensitivity, they all wondered how she would react.

Janet's heart stopped for a moment as she realized what had just happened. She had a choice to make, Would she cringe and turn red from embarrassment and die right on the spot?

Her reaction surprised everyone, including herself. "Toss it here Omni." she called.

She caught it out of the air and laughed as she stuffed it back into her swimming suit and adjusted it.

Later she commented, "What I supposed to do? I could either laugh or cry.

On Saturday they broke camp. Those who came up from Utah went that direction and the rest went back to Rexburg, with Craig and his family going on to Burley to spend a few days with Gean.

On Sunday, Sheffield and Ramona went to church with Norma and Wade and later in the day, Samantha, who was going to be a senior, received her patriarchal blessing from her grandfather. The next day, Norma and Wade took Teresa down to Provo to get her situated at BYU for her junior year. So Sheffield and Ramona left that morning as well and flew on over to Boise to spend a couple of days with Hank and Teri Terry. Before going home, they stopped off to see Gean. Sheffield set the Staggerwing down on the Betts' lane and spent the night. Then on Thursday the 28th, they went home after having been away for nearly four weeks.

* * * * *

The Washington Temple open house was between September 17 and November 2 1974, in which over 750,000 people attended. The description of the temple is as it was then according to an article in the August 1974 Ensign. (see <http://thetrumpetstone.blogspot.com/2011/11/washington-dc-lds-temple.html>) The logistics of and flow of the open house are based on conjecture.

The Washington Temple dedication took place on 19–22 November 1974 by Spencer W. Kimball. Over the four days, ten dedication sessions were held in which 40,000 people attended.

High doses synthetic estrogen DES (diethylstilbestrol) was a mainstay in the treatment of metastatic breast cancer in the 1960s and 1970s until 1977. Its side effects included the ones that Janet had.