

Chapter LXI

Something An Old Man Can Do

August 28, 1975 – July 8, 1976

After being gone for so long, Sheffield was a little behind and had a number of blessings to give over the next couple of weeks. Although they had just had their family reunion, Craig and his family joined them for the Labor Day picnic. Even though it was technically still summer, it was fall. The days were getting shorter and it had cooled down just a little. Todd and Tina went back to school the next day. Gean, who only needed four classes to complete her degree, was taking two correspondence courses from the University of Idaho. Her plan was to take two classes each each semester so she could graduate. Geoff had been transferred to Littleton, Colorado, a suburb of Denver, where he was a district leader. Norma and Janet's kids were all back in school as well, including Teresa who was at BYU.

And Sheffield and Ramona resumed their regular routines. Ramona continued to volunteer at the hospital and teaching her Sunday School class. Sheffield had less structure to his schedule, but the preparation he put in to giving patriarchal blessings was more time consuming and demanding than one might think. During the fall, they made a couple of trips up to Washington to attend the temple.

During October they enjoyed a beautiful Indian Summer. On one of their trips to Washington, they made a fall drive of it and drove up through the Shenandoah Valley and back down the east side of the Blue Ridge Mountains. November hinted of the approaching winter with a cold, rainy spell. That year Norma, Janet, and Gean and their families came home for Thanksgiving. The day after Thanksgiving, the entire family went up to the cabin and spent the night, returning the next day with two Christmas trees, one for Sheffield and Ramona and one for Craig's Family. Their company all left to go home on Sunday.

Sheffield celebrated his seventy seventh birthday on Sunday December 7th. He was feeling his age more and more the older he got. His left leg that had bothered him for more than thirty years was giving him more difficulty and for some time Ramona noticed that his hearing wasn't as good anymore. He had resisted her insistence that he get it checked, but finally succumbed and ended up getting a hearing aid for his right ear. He relied more and more on Craig and especially Todd to help him with things around the ranch. Other than that, he was healthy and fit. He could still drive and fly his plane and planned on doing so as long as he could.

Since the kids had come for thanksgiving, they each spent Christmas with their in laws, but on Christmas day, they did talk to them on the telephone. Sheffield and Ramona welcomed in 1976 while on a three day getaway down to Florida, which included a visit with his former enemy, John Godfrey and his wife. John, formerly known as Johann Gottfried, was the captain of the German Raider Edelweiss.

In January, Geoff was transferred to Pueblo, Colorado where his second cousin, Anna, lived. Marcella wrote to tell them that Winnie had died from a drug overdose at the young age of thirty one. It was

hard on her after losing Harvey only six months before, although in actuality she had lost Winnie long before. Later in the month, Sheffield and Ramona celebrated their thirty second anniversary.

The first part of the year went much like the fall had been without anything too exciting happening. One exception was that Sheffield received a letter from the Secretary of the Navy informing him that one of the eight new guided missile frigates being funded during 1976 would be named in his honor. To have a ship named for someone was a high honor. He was included with a number his fellow flag officers with an aviation rating from the Second World War being honored, such as James "Jocko" Clark, Donald Duncan, and Clifton Sprague. The list included other of his peers as well but who were not aviators. The only difference was, Sheffield was the only one still living. The United States Navy had a long tradition that no vessel be named for a living person, and an equally long tradition, stretching back to the Continental Navy, of breaking it from time to time. The most recent instance was in the naming of the USS Richmond K. Turner in 1961.

All of the excitement came at once toward the end of May with two grandchildren graduating from high school and one from college. It was pretty much a repeat of three years earlier

On the 22nd of May, Sheffield and Ramona flew to Rexburg in the Staggerwing with Roger and Chantelle for Samantha's graduation from Madison High School on the 26th. Her plans were to attend Ricks College in the fall. Sheffield and Ramona made a quick trip down to see Janet for a couple of days since they were so close. On Sunday they returned to Rexburg to pick up the Rowans and flew home on Monday, which was Memorial day.

Then later that week on Wednesday the 2nd they attended Todd's graduation from Andrew Lewis High School in Salem. He too planned to attend Ricks College in the fall. Like his older sister and brother had before him, he would stay with his Aunt Norma and Uncle Wade. He was looking forward to Geoff coming home during the summer because he too was planning on returning to Ricks.

The last graduation was that of Gean. She had completed her correspondence courses and earned her degree. Her graduation was a bit anticlimactic as she simply received her diploma in the mail. Just the same, she had earned it. She and Nathan and Dewayne had just moved into a lovely brick home about two miles from where they had been living next to his parents. Earlier that spring, the Betts had bought an additional four hundred acres that bordered their farm on the west. The ground came with the house, which they had remodeled before moving into it.

Ramona celebrated her seventy third birthday on the 3rd. With the energy and vitality of a woman approaching sixty, she was not slowing down in the least and sometimes it was all Sheffield could do to keep up with her. More and more people who didn't know them either thought that she was his daughter or that he had robbed the cradle when he married her.

Two days later on Saturday afternoon, Ramona got a frantic call from Chantelle Rowan. Her voice told that she was upset about something. After Ramona said hello, Chanettel asked "Have you heard from Wade and Norma?"

"Not since she called me on my birthday. Why, is something wrong?"

"I just got call from Jolene in Blackfoot. She said something about a dam broke and washed away Rexburg. They were bracing for it to hit there in Blackfoot during the night."

"Oh no. Thats terrible."

"I tried calling them, I tried calling my mother and all of my family there but no matter who I called, all I get is a message that says all of the circuits are busy. I don't know if their safe or what."

"I do know that Norma and Wade were going to go camping yesterday for Wade's birthday." Ramona said. "Hopefully they weren't there."

"I can't imagine what's going on." Chantelle sobbed. "For all I know, they've all been washed away."

"With all of the hills around there, I'm sure everyone made it to higher ground." Ramona encouraged, trying to hide her own concern.

"I hope you're right. Its hard being so far away and not get any accurate news. Jolene's right there in Blackfoot and she can't even get the story straight. I'll keep trying to get through to someone. If I hear anything, I'll let you know."

"Thanks Chanettelle. I'll see if Gean has heard anything and I'll let you know what I find out."

Ramona hung up the telephone, shaken by the news. She immediately tried call Gean in Burley to see if she knew anything. At least the call went through, but no one answered. About then Sheffield came in from outside and she gave him the bad news.

Later in the afternoon, Sheffield turned on the CBS Evening news to see if anything was said about it. All they did was show a still photograph of the dam giving way and mentioned the area impacted by flooding but gave no report of damage or casualties.

Later in the evening the telephone rang, Sheffield quickly answered, hoping that it was Norman. Instead it was Janet.

"Dad." she gasped. "I just saw on the news that the dam above Rexburg broke and flooded the town."

"Yeah thats what we heard too. The Rowans got a call from Jolene in Blackfoot, but thats all we know. We've tried to call but all of the circuits are out. What can you tell us."

"Well, according to the news on KSL, early this morning they noticed that the dam was leaking. It got worse and about a quarter after eleven they issued an evacuation order to everyone downstream. Then just before noon, the dam collapsed sending a wall of water rushing downstream. The news report said that after

wiping out Sugar City, a ten to fifteen foot wall of water came crashing into Rexburg at around two thirty.”

“So that gave everyone better than three hours to get to higher ground.” Sheffield reasoned.

“Yeah. They said that most everyone heeded the warning and went up on the hill by the college. They said that there are only four confirmed deaths. Certainly Norma and her family were able to get out in in time.”

“The last we knew was that they were going to go camping on Thursday and Friday for Wade's birthday. They might not have even been in the area.”

“I hope not. From the pictures on the news, there's not much left. Downtown was completely under water. They showed houses, cars, and livestock being swept along with the flood. I can't imagine what it did to their house where it's right on the river.”

“This sounds much worse than I imagined.” Sheffield said. “I just hope we hear from them soon, so that we know for sure that they're safe. What else did they say on the news?”

“They're calling for volunteers to go help up there. One thing they said was the water supply was contaminated, so Jerry took his water truck that he uses up on the range and filled it up and headed up there. I haven't heard if he made it there or not.”

“Thanks for the information, Janet. At least we know what happened. As soon as we hear anything from them, we'll let you know.”

After hanging up, Sheffield told Ramona what Janet had told him. They had a restless night worrying about Norma and Wade and the kids. They tried to remember that they had gone camping and might not have even been there, and if they were, they had time to get out. They could only image what happened to their home.

On Sunday morning while Sheffield was getting ready to go to priesthood meeting, Roger called to tell them that heard from Jolene again. During the night the lowland areas around Blackfoot had flooded but they were alright. She passed along pretty much the same information that Janet had told them the night before. But still no word from Wade. Jolene also mentioned the call for volunteers and that Sedric was making plans to go up with his backhoe on Monday.

At priesthood meeting and later at Sunday School, people who had heard about the flood expressed concern for Norma and Wade. Some even speculated that the flood was much worse, claiming that the dams downstream had also given way from the onslaught of the flood. That didn't help settle their uncertainty, knowing that Gean was downstream.

When they got home from Sunday School, the telephone was ringing. Ramona practically ran to answer it, hoping to get to it in time.

“Hello.” she said breathlessly.

“Mom.”

“Norma. Are you alright?”

“Yes, were all fine. I can't talk long, but I wanted you to know that we're alright.”

“Thank God. We were so worried. So what happened.”

“Well, I had told you that we were going camping for Wade's birthday. We went over to Palisades on Thursday and came home yesterday. As we neared town, we ran into a road block. They told us that the dam had broke and that a flood was coming and turned us away. We turned around with the Suburban and camp trailer and started back the way we came. Then Wade turned off and went the back way to his aunts house on the hill by the college. When we got there several other of his relatives had gathered there as well.

“A few minutes later, we watched as the flood hit. I've never seen anything like it. Logs from the sawmill on the north side of town were picked up and acted like battering rams as they smashed to pieces everything in their path. Entire houses were swept off their foundations and floated away. We can't get home to see what happened to our house. I'm sure its a goner. But at least we're high and dry, and safe.”

“I'm glad to hear that. We were so worried.”

“We just got out of a big meeting at the field house in the Hart Gym. It was our church meeting for the day. They told us that they were getting organized and to just sit tight until they figured out what to do next. Last night we stayed in our camp trailer. I guess that will be home for a while. Listen I need to go. Since all of the phones are out, I'm calling from the Manwarring Center on campus. The college was able to get their phones up and working and are letting us use them to let our families know that we're safe. Will you let Wade's folks know we're alright.”

“I sure will. Get back in touch with us when you can.”

“I don't know when that might be. But I promise I will as soon as I can. I really need to go now. I love you.”

“I love you too. Goodbye.”

“That sounds like good news. What did she say?” Sheffield asked.

“I'll tell you what. Why don't you listen in while I tell Roger and Chantelle. That way I don't have to explain it twice.”

Ramona immediately called the Rowans and told Roger everything that Norma a had told her. Sheffield was relieved as he listened to her end of the conversation. In return, he was able to pass along some further information that Jolene had given them. The flood waters moved on down the Snake River and were contained in the American Falls Reservoir, so no further dams had given way. She said that there were then eight confirmed deaths but thousands of head of cattle had been lost. An assessment of damage from the air had revealed that the destruction was massive, but that it would be days before some areas could be

accessed. Roger brought up the idea of going out to help since they were looking for volunteers. That got Sheffield to thinking.

Ramona's next call was to Janet but no one answered. They must have been at church. Then she called Craig and told him what Norma had said. He said that he had talked to Gean. She said that Nathan was getting ready to go up and help. He was going to haul his loader up and was looking for someone to drive two of his trucks up to help with the clean up. That got Sheffield to thinking even more as a plan began to formulate. "Certainly there is something an old man can do to help." he thought.

He called Roger back and said, "Ramona told me that you were wanting to go out and help with the clean up."

"Yeah I would."

"How soon can you be ready?" Sheffield asked.

"Why, what do you have in mind?"

"I'm thinking about flying out tomorrow. Gean's husband there in Burley is looking for someone to drive a couple of trucks up. What do you say?"

"Count me in. I can be ready to leave first thing in the morning." Roger concluded.

Next Sheffield called Nathan.

"Hello, Nathan." Sheffield began. "This is Grandpa Brason. Craig tells me that you're looking for a couple of truck drivers. Have you found anyone yet?"

"No. as a matter of fact, I haven't."

"Good, because I have."

"Really, who?"

"Me and Wade's dad. That is if you want us."

"Sure. That would be great. How soon until you can get here?"

"How would tomorrow afternoon work for you?"

"Perfect. It'll take me tomorrow to get things together anyway. How are you coming?"

"In my Staggerwing. Would it be alright if I landed on your lane?"

"I don't see why not, the crop dusters use it all the time."

"Great. We'll see you tomorrow afternoon."

Sheffield said to himself, "See there is something an old man can do." Then he added, "What an old man can't do, a young man can."

Next he called over to Craig's and asked to speak to Todd. "Say Todd, have you got any leads on that summer job yet?"

"No I don't, Grandpa."

“Good, because I've got one for you?”

“Whats that?”

“Well, remember when you went with us up to Woods Mill after Camille? How would you like to fly out to Idaho with me and Roger Rowan tomorrow to help with the clean up?”

“Yeah sure.” Todd jumped at the chance.

“You do realize that it doesn't pay anything?”

“Sure it does, Grandpa. It might not pay in dollars, but it does in blessings.”

“That it does. Todd. Can you be ready first thing in the morning?”

“I sure can?”

“Good pack enough to last you a while. I'll see you in the morning.”

After talking to Todd, he said to Ramona, “Things are coming together. I've got Roger and Todd both lined up to go with me.”

“What about me? I'm sure they could use my help too. Especially when Norma and Wade can finally get out to their place.”

“By all means. I had just assumed that you'd be coming with me. We're a team, you know.”

Sheffield and Ramona set about making their plans for the trip out west. This certainly wasn't going to be a vacation. At least they didn't feel as powerless when it came to Norma and Wade, but hey had no idea what to expect once they got there.

A little latter, fourteen year old Tina came over to say that she wanted to go too, “Mom and Dad said I could.” she insisted. “I know how to work hard.” she added hoping to convince them.

“Yes you do.” Sheffield said. “You have been a big help to me around here. You do realize that there will be some long days.”

“I know. I just want to do my part too.”

“You're mom and dad have raised you kids well. Sure you can come with us.”

That afternoon when they went to sacrament meeting, those who had expressed their concern that morning were relieved to know that they had finally heard from Norma and Wade and that they were safe. Some even gave them cash to help out. That evening they finished packing and getting ready for the trip.

Early the next morning, Craig and Edith brought Todd and Tina over before Craig had to be to work. He helped pull the Staggerwing out of the hangar and get it ready for the flight. A few minutes later, Chantelle brought Roger over. She had considered going with them since her family was involved in the flood too. She knew that her brother's house had been washed away, her mother's house had been flooded, but didn't know the fate of Wade's home. They were all safe and were being taken care of by the rest of her family. She didn't know what more she could do, besides she felt that her kids and grandkids in

Roanoke needed her.

They all loaded their luggage into the storage compartment and after a round of hugs and goodbyes they boarded the plane. Not knowing when they would be back, Craig, Edith, and Chantelle waved goodbye as Sheffield began his take off run.

Seconds later, they were airborne and gaining altitude as they climbed to clear the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west. The sun rose higher in the sky behind them as they headed west. There was the usual stops in Springfield and McCook for fuel and lunch, and they continued on. Sheffield's course took them to Rexburg, even though that wasn't their destination.

Sheffield swooped down over the town so they could have a look for themselves. Two days after the flood had swept through, water was still standing in many places. Those places where the water had receded looked like a muddy bog. They could see people working to drain the standing water, clear debris, or attempting to assess the damage. It reminded Sheffield of Wood's Mill all over again.

The scene below also reminded him of seeing the damage in Tokyo when he went back five years after the war. Even then large segments of the city were piles of rubble with only the foundations remaining. This was much the same, only water and mud was everywhere. Some homes were still intact, others were off their foundations, others still were in shambles, smashed by trees, logs, and vehicles. Dead animals were everywhere, even in town.

They couldn't have landed the airport if they wanted to. It was littered with wrecked planes and other debris. A house had washed in from who knows where was setting just off the runway. They flew on to the west and got a good look at Norma and Wade's house. Miraculously, it was still standing. It was obvious that the water had been pretty high as it was covered with mud nearly to the second story. The barn was gone. Debris was scattered around the yard. Wade's pickup had been shoved up against a tree and his tractor had been knocked over on its side. The car that Craig had kept there was resting on its top out in the pasture behind the house. The only cattle he saw were dead ones. There was no way of telling if they were his or had washed in with the flood.

Sheffield pulled up and came back around for another pass from the opposite direction. The road in either direction was littered with debris that would have to be cleared before anyone could get in. The bridge to the south was still standing but was obviously damaged.

As they made one more pass over the town, the magnitude of the amount of work that it would take to clean up the mess was overwhelming. It was obvious that power and telephone lines were down. Even then, a few crews were working to restore service.

Roger had him fly over his sister in law's house on the hill by the college. Wade's camper trailer was parked in their driveway but no one was around. As Sheffield pulled up, he had Ramona write on a piece of

paper, "Norma and Wade, we're on our way. Just so you know, your house is still standing. Mom and Dad."

He had her wrap it around a big Snickers bar that no one had eaten yet. As he flew over slow and low a second time, he tossed it out the window. It was heavy enough to drop like a rock. Todd saw it hit the ground in the middle of the front lawn where someone should be able to find it.

From Rexburg, they followed the highway coming from Idaho Falls. There was a roadblock and checkpoint just south of town. The only traffic on the road was heading to town. There were scores of utility trucks, construction equipment, and buses. Most likely all coming to help.

As they neared Blackfoot, Roger had him fly over Jolene's house. He had called her the day before to tell her that they were coming. It was obvious that the area had been flooded too. It looked like it came to within a mile of their house. But there wasn't the destruction that they had seen in Rexburg.

It wasn't long before they arrived over Burley. Sheffield found the Betts Farm and circled around and got a good look at the place from the air. Once lined up with their lane he came in for a landing. It was just like landing on his landing strip back at the Two Star Ranch, only this was much longer. He taxied right up to the shop and shut off the engine. Off to the side, the two bobtail trucks and his pickup with the loader on a trailer were parked and ready to head out first thing in the morning.

By then he had everyone's attention. As they were getting out of the plane, Gean and Nathan came to greet them, Gean had eighteen month old Dwayne in her arms. Randal and Susan also came out to meet them. The first thing Ramona did was to take her great grandson from her granddaughter's arms. He had grown so much since she had seen him at Christmas.

"You have more helpers with you than I expected." Nathan said. "That's good. I'm glad you came Todd." he said as he landed a soft punch on his arm. With Gean's arms free, she gave her little sister a hug.

"This is quite a place you have here." Sheffield said as he shook Randal's hand. "We got a good look at it from the air as we came in. We really didn't get a feel for what you had when we were here the first time."

"It's a little bigger now," Randal said. "after we picked up the place on the west this spring."

"We flew over your house Gean." Ramona added. "It looks lovely. I can't wait to see it."

After the greetings, Nathan and his father helped unload the plane. The shop doors weren't quite wide enough for the thirty two foot wingspan of the Stagewing to fit through, but by pushing it through at an angle so it would fit.

Since there were more people than they were expecting, Randal and Susan offered to put Roger up for the night. The rest accompanied Gean and Nathan to their new home. To get to their house, they went back up the lane a quarter of a mile to the main road, three quarters of a mile to the west and a mile back to the north.

It was a lovely brick home with a nice yard. "Wow." Ramona exclaimed. "This is pretty nice for a

young couple.”

“It just happened to come with the land.” Gean beamed.

When they went inside, Gean showed them around. One of the nice features was the large picture window in the living room. The kitchen and dining room was spacious and open. A double sliding glass door stepped out onto a patio, with a nice view of the mountains to the south. There were five bedrooms, one of which Nathan had converted into an office. There were two spare rooms that weren't being used yet. She put her grandparents in one and her sister in the other. Her brother got the couch.

After seeing the house Ramona commented, “You have plenty of room to raise a family in this house.”

The next morning, Gean had breakfast ready for her guests before sending them off. When they went back over to Randal's house there was one more vehicle in the lineup. They hadn't really given much thought to where they would stay once they got to Rexburg. The issue was now solved as Randal's brother in law offered the use of his 1975 Chevrolet Bendix Citation Motorhome, which was self contained with a toilet and shower, a fifty gallon water tank full of water, a small kitchenette with a refrigerator, gas stove, and a table. Most importantly, it slept six, which worked out since there were six of them going. The sleeping arrangements still needed to be worked out.

In addition to the motorhome, the caravan included the two 1971 GMC trucks with dump beds. Nathan's pickup was loaded with a dual fuel tank filled with gasoline for the trucks and diesel for the tractor. It also contained a portable generator and an arc welder plus an acetylene torch with two gas cylinders. He had rounded up a number of shovels, scoops, rakes and other tools. He had also thrown in a chain saw, and a large chain. Hitched to the pickup was a flatbed utility trailer. Snuggly secured to it was an older Farmall 560 diesel tractor with a front end loader and an eight foot scraper on the back.

Nathan explained, “Both trucks and my pickup each have a two way radio so we can stay in touch. They're all set to the same frequency and have a range of seven to ten miles. To talk on it, simply pick it up and press the button. Keep in mind that anyone tuned to this frequency can hear everything that you say.”

Randal interrupted, “You know, it would only take me a moment to take a radio out of one of the other trucks and put in the motorhome. That way you can all stay in touch.”

“Thats a good idea Dad.” Nathan said.

“There is one thing we're going to need.” Sheffield said. “When we flew over yesterday we noticed all of the mud. Is there a place in town where we can stop off at and get some rubber boots?”

“Good point.” Nathan said. “I didn't think of that. I have a pair that I need to grab before we go. We can stop at the farm and home store on the south end of town, they have boots and anything else we might think of.”

“We should stock up on groceries too.” Ramona added. I’m sure it would be a lot easier to get them here.”

“Another good point. After we stop at the farm and home store, we can stop at the grocery store.”

Roger was assigned to drive one of the trucks and Todd the other. Sheffield was given the motorhome and Ramona and Tina would ride along with him.

Once the radio had been installed in the motorhome and Nathan had grabbed his boots, the caravan began rolling up the lane and out onto the road that led to the highway. All four vehicles stopped off at the farm and home store and everyone went in. Each one found a pair of rubber boots that fit them. But that wasn’t all they bought. They each got a pair of leather gloves and a hat. Someone thought to grab some canteens. The next stop was at the grocery store. Rather than everyone go in, they waited while Ramona and Tina went in. They came back with material to make sandwiches, pork and beans, potato chips and pop, and some milk and cereal for breakfast. Oh and some paper plates and bowls, plastic cups and knives forks and spoons.

Once they were ready, they rolled through Burley and got on the interstate and headed east, with Sheffield leading the charge. The radios came in quite handy along the way as they became somewhat spread out. There were obviously others who had the same idea heading the same direction. There were several other trucks and lots of construction equipment and several buses loaded with people. When they reached the junction with Interstate 15 at Pocatello, they merged with a string of similar traffic, including utility trucks from the Utah Power and Mountain Bell, coming up from Utah.

By then, their caravan had become quite scattered and mixed in with the other traffic. Sheffield got on the radio and advised everyone to pull off at the rest area in the lava flows between Blackfoot and Idaho Falls to regroup. Everyone acknowledged the advise, so Sheffield pulled off and waited. Within fifteen minutes they were regrouped and pulled back onto the interstate together and stayed together the rest of the way.

At Idaho Falls, the Idaho State Police had set up a check point to divert any unnecessary traffic. The car ahead was not not allowed through, for whatever reason, and was directed to turn around. Sheffield stopped and explained to the officer that he was the lead vehicle of the two trucks and one pickup directly behind him and that they were going to Rexburg to assist with the clean up. The officer let him and the rest through before stopping the next vehicle behind them.

They encountered another road block just before going into Rexburg. This time the checkpoint was manned by National Guard troops. The soldier was a little more thorough as he questioned Sheffield about their intentions, since the motorhome didn’t seem to fit the profile for cleanup volunteers. Sheffield explained, “We flew out from Virginia yesterday to assist our daughter and her family with the cleanup. The

three trucks behind me are with us. We brought the motorhome so we'd have a place to stay.”

After looking at his drivers license, the officer instructed him to check in with the command center at the Manwarring Center and register as volunteers and get a pass to permit entry into the area. “There's a lot of unsecured property here and we are trying to keep tabs on who comes and goes.”

“I understand.” Sheffield replied and he was allowed to pass through.

This time each of them had to stop and show their drivers license and receive the same instructions before they could get through.

As instructed, they went to check in and register as volunteers and got their passes. When asked if they had a place to stay, they really didn't have one and were directed to a makeshift campground on the hill above the campus that had been set up for such a purpose.

For such a calamity, everything was so organized and seemed to run smoothly. They learned that everything was coordinated by the local Church leaders. The city and county leaders identified what needed done and the church saw to it that it was done. They were told that the federal government had not yet responded, and it was their dam that had caused the problem.

Those who could get to their own homes were busy salvaging what they could. Those who couldn't get to their homes yet, helped out elsewhere until they could. The flood victims, townspeople, and volunteers from out of the area all worked side by side. It wasn't surprising that most, but not all, of the volunteers were Mormons who had come from all over. Some were there for a day or two, others were there for the long haul. Even more amazing was that no one expected any compensation for their time and material.

After checking in and getting their passes the man at the desk said, “When you're ready come back and we'll put you to work.”

They followed the directions to the campground and where directed to a spot to park the motorhome. The trucks were directed into a vacant lot just across the road. The campsite was nothing more than a place to park without any hookups of any kind, so the generator would come in handy. There were trailers, campers and tents setup but hardly anyone was around.

From that vantage point they could look down over the town and surrounding country and could see exactly where the flood had come through. Having seen it from the air the day before, they had a pretty good idea of the mess it had made.

While they were getting set up, Roger drove his truck to his sister in law's house which was just down the street. As luck would have it, he found her at home and let them know that they were there. Wade and Norma had got the message that they were coming but weren't there at the time, she wasn't sure where they were.

When Roger returned, lunch was ready. After getting a bite to eat, they locked up the motorhome and reported for duty. With the equipment they had brought with them, they were sent to the north side of town with the assignment to gather up dead livestock, except for Ramona who was assigned to work with the Red Cross who were set up in the field house.

It wasn't a pleasant job, as after three days the cattle had bloated. They stunk and were attracting flies. In that area, there were scores of dead cows and calves that had come from a feed lot up stream. The boots they bought that morning came in handy as they were up past their ankles in muck and mud.

The first thing was to remove the end gates so the carcasses could slide out. The tractor was unloaded and they went to work. With the chain draped around the bucket, the ends were wrapped around the dead animals hind quarters so it could be hoisted in the air and loaded into the truck, where someone had to unhook the chain. Tina didn't let the fact that she was girl stop her as she pitched in and worked along side of the men.

When the first truck was loaded, Sheffield drove it further north of town to where all of the animals from that area were being dumped in large holes that had been dug to receive them. As a section of the hole was filled, it was covered over with dirt.

And so it went all day until late in the afternoon. When they were done for the day, they were dirty, tired, and hungry. Fortunately the showers at the gymnasium and campus laundry facilities were available to clean up.

With the telephones still out, it was hard to contact anyone. That evening, Wade and Norma and the kids came and found them and they were reunited. Sheffield told them what they saw when they flew over their house. Other than the note attached to the Snickers bar, they had no idea what kind of shape their place was in, other than it would be a few days before they could get to it.

Since most of the county's road equipment had been destroyed in the flood, they were dependent upon assistance from the surrounding counties and construction contractors who were donating men and equipment. Slowly progress was being made in the county.

On Wednesday they were again assigned to livestock duty, but on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday they worked on cleaning out stores on Main Street. People packed damaged merchandise and fixtures out in their arms or in wheel barrels and dumped it in the street. Items that could be salvaged were set aside for later. Nathan and others loaded it up into trucks to be hauled off. It didn't matter who loaded which trucks. Sheffield and Roger hauled load after load to the dump while Todd and Tina worked along side of Norma and Wade and their kids.

Ramona had the cushy job, working at the Red Cross first aid station. They were busy treating the minor injuries that were incurred by the workers. Things like people being cut by broken glass, sprained

ankles, dehydration, and the such. The more serious cases were sent to the hospital.

By the end of the first week, everyone had been accounted for. Eleven lives were lost as a result of the flood. The cost estimates of the damage was still unknown. Early estimates put it at more than a billion dollars. The clean up efforts that week had barley put a dent in what still needed to be done. Some days the weather cooperated, other days it didn't. After the clean up would come the rebuilding. For those who's homes had been damaged or lost, it would be some time before they would be back in their homes. Many of those who found themselves homeless were living in the college dormitories and apartments. Others were staying with relatives.

They had found Jerry who had been kept busy hauling water and he too was staying with them. They had ran across Sedric, who was there with his backhoe. He lived close enough that he could come and go as he could. At the end of the week, Jerry had to take his water truck and get back to the ranch. He came and found Sheffield and the rest to say goodbye before leaving.

When the Federal Government's disaster relief coordinator and his staff showed up later in the week, they were amazed at the organization that was in place and the work that had already been done. Rather than step in and take charge, he simply asked, "What can we do to help?"

On Sunday the flood victims and the volunteers got a break from the work at hand. Sheffield and Ramona and their crew attended a special conference with Norman and Wade at the Hart Auditorium. President Spencer W. Kimball and Elder Boyd K. Packer flew up from Salt Lake to Idaho Falls that morning, then took a helicopter to Rexburg. After touring the area form the air, they landed at the college and met with the saints and others in two separate sessions. Their presence offered hope and encouragement. After the meeting, Sheffield took his grandkids up on the stage so they could meet the prophet.

On Monday, they went back to work, along with everyone else. Their assignment that day and the next was to haul off downed trees as crews cut them into smaller pieces. On Wednesday and Thursday, it was scooping up and hauling off mud that had been shoveled out of houses.

Finally on Thursday Wade received word that they get to their house, albeit they had to go the round about way to get there because the bridge down the road was still impassable. When they pulled into the driveway and saw their home, Norma covered her mouth as she gasped. They just sat there for a moment as they took it all in. It was pretty much as Sheffield had described it.

Since the flood, they had seen the havoc that it had wrecked on others. Some had lost everything, including their homes. But now they saw for themselves what it had done to them, there was an element of shock as what the flood had done to them personally sank in. They got out of the Suburban to take a closer look.

It was miraculous that the house was even still standing. Then they discovered the reason for the

miracle. A large tree and other debris on the leading edge of the wave were caught by two of the trees in the front yard, which diverted the main force of the flood from striking the house directly. As it split and went around the house, water and mud rushed in from either side and filled the first story.

Then upon their first inspection, the downstairs looked to be a total loss, but the rooms upstairs hadn't been touched. The floor downstairs was covered with several inches of mud and the walls had mud all over them and had begun to mold. Seeing the inside of their home was sickening, but at least they still had a home where so many others didn't.

Wade hoped that the framing could be salvaged. But before anything could be done, they had to have an insurance adjuster look at it. Fortunately the town happened to be full of them, the only question was how soon could one come out.

After checking out the house, they surveyed the rest of the place. The barn with all of Wade's veterinary equipment that he had brought with them from Virginia and his saddles, bridles, and other things was gone. Wade's pickup had been shoved up against a tree and was full of mud. It was obviously a total loss. They could see Craig's car resting on its top out in the pasture behind the house. It too was most likely unsalvageable, as was the tractor. Several dead cattle lay all around, there was no sign of his calves and two horses.

Right then, they determined to bring their camp trailer out and set up camp on their own property, although there was still no electricity and the well was certainly contaminated. At least they would be home and could keep an eye on what was left and begin doing what they could.

They drove back into town and talked to their insurance agent and an adjuster was scheduled to come out on the next Tuesday. While talking to their agent, he recommended that they contact the Federal Housing and Urban Development agent about getting a HUD trailer until they could get back into their house. The first trailers were already beginning to arrive.

Wade and Norma took their advice and went to see them. Naturally there was some paperwork to fill out but they were pretty much approved on the spot. It would still be several days before a trailer could be delivered.

For the first time in twelve days, Wade and Norma could begin to look forward to rebuilding their lives after being in limbo since the flood. Teresa would be going back to BYU, so that was one less person to house. Samantha had planned on living at home while she attended Ricks College in the fall and they had agreed to let Todd and Geoff stay with them. Now the obvious solution would be for them to find housing on campus. They went and found Todd where they were working that day and took him and Samantha to apply for college housing. They were able to get Todd and Geoff a room as roommates in one of the boys dorms. Since there were always more girls enrolled, finding girls housing was more difficult. All

of the dorms and off campus apartments were already committed, but they said that if something came open, they bump her to the top of the waiting list due to the circumstances. That took care of two more they wouldn't have to squeeze in.

That evening, they told Sheffield and Ramona what they had done that day. It was decided that the next day they wouldn't get an assignment from the clean up coordinator and would shift their emphasis to helping Wade and Norma. They called Jerry to see if he could bring his water truck so they could at least have water.

On Friday morning, Wade and Norma lead the way in their Suburban, pulling their camp trailer. The motorhome, two trucks, and Nathan in his pickup pulling the trailer with his tractor on it followed as they made their way out to their place. The first thing that needed to be done was for Nathan to clear a place to set up the camp trailer and the motorhome. Once they were set up, Nathan's generator was hooked up to give them a limited source of electricity.

Since they couldn't do anything to the house until the adjuster had been out, they turned their attention to cleaning up the debris around the house. The first things that had to go were the dead animals. By that time the carcasses had begun to decompose. Nathan dug a hole way down in the pasture with the front end loader on his tractor. Then one by one, he scooped them up and dumped them in. While he was doing that, everyone else worked on picking up the yard and throwing the debris into the back of the trucks. Later in the day, Jerry showed up with his water truck, full of clean water. Janet and the kids had followed in the car and after lunch they left to go back home.

After being away for two weeks, on Saturday Nathan had to leave and return to his farm. However, he left them with the generator, tractor, and trucks and his uncle let them continue to use the motorhome. Everyone else took a break on Saturday after all of the hard work they had put in. They cleaned up and went to Idaho Falls for the day to get some groceries, go out to eat, and take in a movie. Then on Sunday they all attended church in Norma and Wade's ward. It was the first time had met since the flood. After a break, on Monday they went back to work cleaning up.

As scheduled, the adjuster came out to assess the damage on Tuesday. After making out his report, they were able to start going through the house. The first chore was scooping out all of the mud. Most things had to be thrown out and were loaded into one of the trucks to be taken to the landfill. Sadly, most of their photo albums and scrapbooks had to go. Anything made of fabric had begun to mold and had to be thrown out. All of the electrical appliances were ruined. Some of the things that were hanging on the walls could be salvaged, however. The things that could be saved were stored upstairs. They worked all the rest of that week cleaning out the first floor of the house.

Once it was emptied out, they spent the next week removing the siding from the outside and the

walls on the inside, stripping them to the bare studs. The electrical wiring would need to be replaced, but with some cleaning, the windows could still be used.

The next to go was the floorboards. Using a pry bar, Wade began tearing up the floor and had the girls throw the wet, rotting wood into the truck. As he lifted up a corner section, they were greeted by something that drew a blood curdling scream from Samantha. It even unnerved Wade, and not much unnerved him.

“Just back up and give it some space.” he said calmly.

“What is it?” his dad, who was nearby asked.

“There’s a rattle snake coiled up in the corner.” he announced. “It must have washed down out of the canyon with the flood.”

Marty, who was curious by nature, wanted a closer look. Wade put out his arm to stop him from getting too close. “Where is it?” he asked.

“In the corner.” Wade said, pointing at the lethargic creature.

“Its cool and damp in there so he’s not very active. Once the sun warms him up, look out.” Wade the veterinarian said. Then he added, “Go grab a shovel.”

A moment later with the shovel in hand, he sliced off the reptile’s head and the rattler went to vermin heaven, if there is such a place for snakes.

Wade fished it out with the shovel and took it over to the truck to throw it in with the rest of debris. The girls recoiled in fear of the dead snake dangling from the shovel as he made his way by them. After tossing it, he said, “I hope he didn’t have any friends with him.”

The thought that there might be more of them made everyone particularly cautious as they went back to work.

Soon all of the floor boards were torn out, leaving only the floor joists. The crawl space under the floor was wet and needed to dry. The entire first floor needed to dry and air out before rebuilding could begin. After all of their hard work and several loads to the dump, they were to the point where they could begin rebuilding. The house looked rather odd with the first floor all opened up, the studs exposing skeleton of the house, with only the windows in place.

During that week, the power lines were replaced and they had electricity again, but it was going to take a little longer for telephone service to be restored. Now that they had electricity they could run the well. At first they had to just let it run for several hours to get rid of the contamination. Then it had to be tested before they could use it again. Once they had electricity and water, the generator and the water truck were no longer needed. On Saturday, Janet and Jerry came back up for the truck. Since there wasn’t any room for them to spend the night, they turned around and went back the same day.

The 4th of July was on Sunday that year. It also happened to be Fast Sunday. Again that week, they all attended Norma and Wade's ward. During Fast and Testimony meeting, nearly everyone in attendance had something that they wanted to say and the meeting went considerably overtime.

The 4th of July Parade was held on Monday the 5th. Main Street had been cleared away, but the storefronts still bore the scars from the damage that had been done. The parade and the festivities were a far cry from the bicentennial celebration that had been anticipated, but they went on as planned.

Now that hardest part of the work had been tackled, they all sat down together to decide what to do next. The plan was for Roger and Todd to stay and help Wade get started on rebuilding. Sheffield, Ramona and Tina could finally go home. Wade had received word that the HUD trailer they were approved for would arrive later in the week.

While the house was drying out, on Wednesday another caravan went back the opposite direction. The Suburban pulled the trailer with the tractor on it. The motorhome and one of the trucks made up the rest of the caravan. Nathan let Wade keep one of the trucks to haul building materials with or whatever else he needed it for.

After delivering the the tractor, motorhome, and truck. Norma and Wade had to go back as their trailer was coming the next day. Sheffield, Ramona, and Tina spent the night with Gean and Nathan and after being away from home for a month, they flew back to Virginia on Thursday the 8th. All the way home, Sheffield and Ramona looked forward to be going home to their own home and to sleep in their own bed. After seeing what so many people had lost, they were grateful for what they had.

When they landed and unloaded the plane, Edith took Tina home. After unpacking, the first thing they did was to go out to the bathhouse. After a good shower, they climbed into the tub for a nice relaxing soak.

"This feels so good on my aching old bones." Sheffield commented.

"You really worked hard. I was amazed at what you did."

"Yeah, well I was glad that there was something that an old man could do to help."

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The description of the Teton Dam Flood is from various accounts. My purpose was not to document the flood, but rather weave it through the story of the Brasons and how it affected Norma and Wade as the rest of the family pitched in to help with the clean up.