

Chapter LXIV

Octogenarian

June 6, 1978 – January 6, 1980

During the previous winter, Sheffield and Ramona received another letter from the Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable W. Graham Claytor, Jr. who was also a native of Roanoke. The letter was an invitation to them and members of the immediate family to attend the christening and launching of the Brason on June 21st. He further appointed Ramona as the ship's Sponsor, which included the priveledge of christening the ship; an honor typically held by women with some connection to the vessel.

The Sponsor's role was an important one and plays a unique role for the Navy. As they christen their ship, bestowing upon the vessel a name chosen by the Secretary of the Navy, they become a part of that ship's history. The crew of the ship may change many times over the course of a ship's life, but the sponsor remains the same, participating in the milestones of the ship's carreer from christening to decommissioning.

Far beyond participation in ceremonial milestones, she has a lifelong relationship with the ship and her crew. While this bond begins with the ship's christening and the initial crew, ideally it extends throughout the ship's service life and even beyond. Sponsors are encouraged to foster this special relationship, and to maintain contact with the initial and successive captains and the men who comprise her crew. This can be as simple as exchanging letters or holiday greeting cards to participating in sailing and homecoming events. In addition the sponsor has one or more maids or martons of honor and a flower girl to accompany her in her official functions. if the sponsor is no longer able to fill her role, it falls to the maid of honor.

In checking with the family, Craig wouldn't be able to attend becasue of work, therefore Edith wouldn't be going either. Wade and Norma agreed to attend, with her being one matron of honor. Jerry wasn't able to go either because of the ranch, but Janet jumped at the chance to also be a matron of honor. The privilege of being the flower girl fell to Pearl.

Ramona responed quikly to the invitation with the requested information and a few days later, those who were part of the offical launching party recieved their plane tickets in the mail, compliments of the Departmen of the Navy. Anyone else going had to pay their own way.

Now that the wedding and reunion were over and everyone had gone home, they looked forward to with eagerness and excitement for the trip. On the eve of their departure, they went over to Geoff's house to celebrate his birthday with his family and Craig, Edith, and Tina. On the morning of Tuesday the 20th, Craig took them to the airport on his way to work. After the short flight to Washington, they flew nonstop across the country and landed at the Seattle – Tacoma International Airport, but their luggage didn't. They were promised that their luggage would be sent directly to their hotel as soon as it arrived.

They had a short wait for the rest of their party to arrive on the flight from Salt Lake City. When they

landed, they met up with Wade, Norma, and Marty and Janet, Andrea, and Pearl, with all of their luggage.

They checked out two rental cars and drove up to downtown Seattle and checked into the Executive Hotel Pacific, which was built in 1928. Sheffield and Ramona decided to rest for a while and see if their luggage arrived, while the rest went exploring downtown Seattle. After they woke up from their nap, there was still no word of their wayward belongings. When the others got back, they freshened up the best they could with what they had and went to get something to eat. By the time they got back, it still hadn't arrived. All they could do was to laugh and go to bed anyway.

Wednesday was an important day and they woke up wondering what to do. They placed another call to the airlines and were told that their luggage had been found in Los Angeles and was on a flight that was scheduled to land in thirty minutes. Once it arrived, they promised to send it directly to them. With that good news, they got ready for the day, the best they could, and went to breakfast.

When they returned to their room, it was waiting there for them. With very little time to spare, they finished getting ready. For Sheffield, that meant putting on his dress white uniform, including all of his ribbons, medals and three stars, that he only wore on special occasions that warranted it, and this was one of them in accordance to Section 10, Article 62001 of Navy regulations. It specifies that "retired personnel may wear uniforms at ceremonies or official functions when the dignity of the occasion and good taste dictate. Wearing a uniform is appropriate for memorial services, weddings, funerals, balls, patriotic or military parades, ceremonies in which any active or reserve United States military unit is participating, and meetings or functions of military associations".

Ramona, in like manner, wore her uniform as well. The rest dressed in their Sunday best.

They were met at the hotel by two limousines provided by the builder, which drove them to the office of the Todd Pacific Shipyard, just over four miles away. At the main gate to shipyard, the security guard permitted the limos to enter and went directly to the main office. There they were received and invited into the office where they were introduced to representatives of Todd Pacific, the labor union and the Navy and were briefed on the day's activities.

The first item on the agenda was a tour of the incomplete ship, which was perched on the slipway where it had been built, waiting to be launched. The hull was complete and the superstructure had been roughed in, but none of the weapons or other equipment had been installed. The ship did have a fresh coat of paint, with everything below the waterline painted red. First, they walked along the bottom of the slipway where they got a good look at the part of the ship that is rarely seen. Along the sides of slip was the material for her sister ship which was going to be laid down later in the day after the Brason had been launched.

Then they went aboard. The four hundred forty five foot long vessel was dressed for the ceremony

as well, with a red white and blue banner draped from the bow, the railings were lined with red, white and blue, and a large American flag flew from the mast. Since the ship was still under construction, material and tools were neatly stacked out of the way. From the main deck, they could see into the building slip next to it where the form of a sister ship being built for the Australian Navy was beginning to take shape. Tied up to the pier nearby was another sister ship being completed that had been launched three months earlier.

After the tour, Admiral Brason, Commander Brason, and the rest of their family were the guests of honor at luncheon that included company executives, key employees who had been involved in the construction, and representatives of the Navy who were overseeing the construction. Each was introduced and explained their function. The Brason had been laid down just under eleven months earlier and had progressed to the point where it was ready to be launched and get her hull wet for the first time.

However, she was almost a year and half from being completed. Sheffield and Ramona were shown a model of what she and her sister ships would look like once they were completed. They were being built at shipyards around the country and only the lead ship of the class, the Oliver Hazard Perry, had been commissioned six months earlier.

While the Northwest Navy Band was playing, Sheffield and Ramona and the family accompanied the other dignitaries to the platform positioned at the bow. Before being seated, a photograph was taken of the entire launching party, consisting of the family and dignitaries, standing in front of the ship's hull. Then the photographer took one of just the family. After the photographer was finished, everyone took their seats.

Before them were seated a number of people who had gathered to witness the ceremony. They mostly consisted of employees of Todd Pacific who were involved with the ship's construction and their families. Behind and above them, a few construction workers were gathered at the bow. They were aboard to handle the ship during the launch.

The master of ceremonies, Mr. Arthur W. Stout, the President of Todd Shipyards, walked to the podium and said, "On behalf of Todd Shipyards, I would like to welcome those assembled, our distinguished guests, and of course the Brason family. Following the presentation of the colors, the invocation will be offered by Commander John Daly, the Chaplain of the Naval Support Activity, Seattle. Now if you will please stand for the presentation of the colors by the honor guard from the University of Washington Naval ROTC."

The cadets, in perfect unison, marched up onto the podium with flags of the United States, the State of Washington, and the US Navy. Once the colors were posted, the band played the national anthem.

Commander Daly came forward and offered a brief invocation upon the proceedings, but did not pronounce a blessing upon the ship, as was customary. In this case, that would take place later during the

ceremony.

Mr. Stout returned to the podium and said, "We are here today to launch yet another ship constructed at our Seattle yard for the United States Navy. This vessel had its beginning when her keel was laid on the twenty ninth of July, last year. Work has proceeded with skill and precision and now today we will give it a name and commit her to the water for the very first time.

The name selected by the Secretary of the Navy for this particular vessel is Brason, in honor of Vice Admiral Sheffield Brason. It is not very often that a ship's namesake participates in the christening of a ship that bears his name, for he is typically deceased. That is not the case today as Admiral Brason is very much alive and his here with us. He will be formally introduced later on, but Admiral Brason, will you please stand."

Sheffield stood up briefly and waved as he was applauded.

Mr. Stout continued, "Accompanying Admiral Brason today is his wife, Commander Ramona Brason. She too will be formally introduced later as the sponsor. Commander Brason, will you please stand."

Like Sheffield, she too stood up briefly and waved as she was applauded.

"The Brasons currently reside in Salem, Virginia. Now will each of the family stand and be recognized as I call your name. As Commander Brason's co-matrons of honor, Mrs. Norma Rowan of Rexburg, Idaho and Mrs. Janet Gover of Clarkston, Utah. Mrs. Rowan and Mrs. Gover are the daughters of Admiral and Commander Brason. And as our flower girl, Miss Pearl Gover. Other members of the family with us today are, Mr. Wade Rowan and his son Martin and Miss Andrea Gover. We are privileged to have them present with us. Unfortunately, other members of the Brason family were unable to be with us.

"Admiral Brason, a grateful nation thanks you for your service to our country by launching a fighting ship that will undoubtedly carry on that tradition in your name.

"Now if it weren't for the United States Navy, there wouldn't be a need for such a vessel. We have with us a number of representatives from the Navy. Will each of you please stand as I mention your names. We are honored to have Admiral Frederick H. Michaelis, the Chief of Naval Material in Washington, D.C. here with us today, who we will hear from a little later. Then we have Vice Admiral Clarence R. Bryan, Commander of the Naval Sea Systems Command, in Washington, D.C., Rear Admiral Floyd H. Miller, the Ship Acquisition Division officer on the Staff of the Chief of Naval Operations also in Washington, D.C., and Captain Sebastian P. Passantino the Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Conversion, and Repair, with the Thirteenth Naval District right here in Seattle. And of course, Commander Daly.

"And last but not least I am pleased to introduce Mr. Carl R. Meurk, executive vice president of Todd Pacific Shipyards, Seattle Division and manager of this facility and Mr. Eugene Hintz, International Representative of the International Association of Sheet Metal Workers, who's members constitute our

workforce here.

“In conclusion, I would just like to say that Todd Pacific has a long history of shipbuilding since the William H. Todd Corporation was founded in nineteen sixteen. This particular facility dates back to nineteen forty, when Todd acquired the property here on Harbor Island in order to create additional construction capacity, which was designed to build destroyers, of which forty were delivered during the Second World War. Since then we have continued in that tradition and have also built a variety of other vessels and craft.

“We at Todd Pacific Shipyards are proud of our long standing relationship with the United States Navy. And today, once this slip is cleared, we will lay down the hull of a frigate for the Australian Navy. We are equally proud of our association with the Sheet Metal Workers, for without their skilled laborers and craftsmen the job wouldn't get done, and a fine job they do. Please give yourselves a hand.”

After their applause subsided, he concluded, “Well thats enough from me. There are many others we need to hear from. Next, I would like to turn the time to Eugene Hintz, of the International Association of Sheet Metal Workers.”

Following Mr. Hintz's remarks, Captain Passantino introduced Vice Admiral Bryan, who then gave his remarks. He was followed by Mr. Meurk who had a few comments before he introduced Admiral Michaelis, the prinipal speaker.

At the conlusiou of the Admiral's remarks, Mr. Stout returned to the podium. “Thank you gentlemen for your remarks.” he began. “Now it will be our pleasure to hear from Admiral Brason.” In his introduction he cited Sheffield's military carrer and personal life up until he retired from the navy for good. He concluded with, “Admiral Braosn returned to coaching and raising his family and wrote two books about his naval experience until he retired in nineteen sixty four. Then the call to serve came once more and the Brasons delayed their retirement to supervise Mormon missionaries in Hawaii for three years. In their retirement the Brasons have enjoyed traveling and being with their grandchildren. Admiral Barson is an ordained patriarch in the Mormon Church and as a minister, at the conclusion of his remarks, he will invoke the blessings of the Almighty upon the ship that will bear his name. Admiral Bason.”

Sheffield stood and walked to the podium. He grasped it in both hands and looked directly at his audience and then over his shoulder. “Thank you for that kind introduction. It is an honor to share this occasion with Admiral Bryan and Admiral Michaelis. I'd like to thank Mister Stout and Mister Meurk of Todd Pacific Shipyards for their hospitality, and thank you to those of you who are building this fine frigate behind me. I am certainly honored that it will bear my name. That is one of the highest honors the Navy can bestow on those wear the uniform.

“In his introduction. Mister Stout made mention of various capacities that I had the opportunity to

serve in during my naval career. I must say that I am proud to have served wherever asked. The advancements and promotions that came my way, came without seeking them. It always seemed that when a need arose, I just happened to be in the right place at the right time to fill it. In whatever came my way, I gave it my all. Obviously, it must have been good enough, or this ship would be given someone else's name today.

“The Navy was a big part of my life, but it wasn't the only thing in my life. I am grateful for my wife, my children, and grandchildren for they are the most important thing in my life. I hope they are proud of this ship as it will represent our family upon the high seas. I just wish that all of them could be here today.

“I would like to tell you of two other naval officers by the name of Brason. My grandfather, Lieutenant Peter Brason and my uncle, Captain Frederick Braosn. I would hope that this ship will also be a memorial of their service as well.

“My Grandpa Brason graduated from the Naval Academy in eighteen sixty and was commissioned an Ensign in the United States Navy. When Virginia succeeded from the Union and joined the Confederacy in eighteen sixty one, and was offered a commission in the Confederate Navy. He first served aboard the CSS Sumter, then the CSS Florida, and later the CSS Shenandoah. He used to tell about the twelve and a half months in eighteen sixty four and eighteen sixty five when the Shenandoah made a commerce raiding cruise, which took them around the world, resulting in the capture or sinking of thirty eight Union merchant vessels, mostly whaling ships. He was always proud of the fact that they had fired the last shot of the Civil War. It was directed at a whaler in waters off the Aleutian Islands weeks after the war had formally ended. He always said, 'We never got the news the the war was over.'

“Having been an lieutenant aboard the Shenandoah, when the war ended, he and the other officers where considered pirates. To avoid prison and execution, they fled to South America. My grandfather went to Rio de Janerio where he hid out for the better part of a year before being granted amnesty and returned home to Fairfax, Virginia.

“My Uncle Rick graduated from Annapolis in eighteen ninety seven, and as an Ensign served aboard the battleship Indiana at the Battle of Santiago during the Spanish American War. As Lieutenant he sailed around the world with the Great White fleet aboard the old Missouri from December nineteen oh seven through February nineteen oh nine. As a Lieutenant Commander aboard the Connecticut, he participated in the Battle of Vera Cruz in nineteen fourteen where he lead a company of Bluejackets in the fighting ashore. Later, as a Commander, in nineteen seventeen he sailed to England aboard the Florida which participated in war patrols in the North Atlantic during the First World War. Following the First World War, he was the commanding officer of the Wyoming. He retired from the Navy with the rank of Captain after twenty five

years in nineteen twenty two. Having served aboard battleships during his entire career, he scoffed when I wanted to become a naval aviator saying that 'I would be throwing my career away.'

"It was partly because of them that I pursued a career in the Navy. Although my grandfather may be considered a rebel, a traitor, and a pirate, he served valiantly, even if it was on the wrong side. The other determining factor in choosing a career in the navy was that I saw it as my ticket to fly. That is all I really ever wanted to do and I still love getting behind the controls and taking to the air.

"If I have any regrets regarding my career, it was that during the war I was stuck on the bridge when I wanted to be in the cockpit. I sent planes and men into battle, wishing that I was going with them. The hardest part of my job was counting those who didn't make it back.

"Now this ship behind me is like an extension of my career in the Navy, and those of my grandfather and uncle. As she embarks on her career, May the God who created the seas go with her. It is now my privileged to invoke the blessings of God on her. Will you please join me."

Sheffield removed his hat and set it on the podium in front of him and folded his arms. He looked around, waiting for others to follow his example. Then he began, "Our Gracious and Glorious God in Heaven, the Father of us all, wilt thou look upon the workmanship of the hands of those who have crafted this vessel from the materials which thou didst place in abundance in the earth.

"Wilt thou bless her in her service to this great nation that she may stand in defense of our liberties and our freedoms, that our wives and children, our homes and communities, our churches, farms, and businesses may ever be free from the evil forces loose in the world that seek to destroy them and take them from us.

"I invoke a blessing upon the components that make up this ship. That her hull may be sound and unbreached, keeping the sea out. May her propulsion system be swift to take her into harms way and speedily bring her back again. May her weapons never be used in anger, but if so may they be reliable and accurate in stopping the enemies of freedom. Bless the other systems and components that make up this ship, that they may serve the purposes for which they are intended.

"Above all, wilt thou bless the men who serve aboard her, from the greatest to least, as they serve their country with honor. Protect them in their service and return them safely again to their loved ones. Bless them with unity as they live, work, and serve together aboard her. May she be a happy ship and an ambassador of goodwill and friendship in the ports that she may call on around the world.

"She is only made of steel by the hands of men, yet may she have a soul and be a living entity for as long as she exists and fill the measure of her creation until no longer of service. Then may the sum of her parts be reused for some other purpose.

“We wish to express our gratitude unto thee for thy bounteous blessings and thy tender mercies that grace our nation and may we ever be worthy of them. In the name of the Captain of the Lord's Hosts, even Jesus Christ, amen.”

At the conclusion of the blessing, Sheffield put his hat back on and returned to his seat. Beaming with pride, Ramona squeeze his arm.

Mr. Stout returned to the podium. “Thank you Admiral Brason for your remarks and for the blessing on the ship. Of all of the ship launchings that I have attend, I can't recall one any finner.

“Now, it is my pleasure to introduce Commander Ramona Brason, the ship's Sponsor.” He introduced her in like manner and concluded with, “May I know present Commander Ramona Brason, who will now christen and launch the good ship Brason.”

Ramona stepped up to the bow that protruded over the platform, with her matrons of honor on either side and Pearl with a lovely bouquet of flowers standing next to Sheffield as they looked on from behind. Ramona picked up the bottle of sparkling cider that had been displayed on the table directly in front of the bow. Typically, champagne was used to christen a ship, but since the ship's namesake had never touched alcohol, they felt that the cider would be an appropriate substitute.

She stood poised in front of the bow with the bottle gripped firmly with both hands like a baseball player standing over home plate waiting for the pitch. Speaking into the microphone she said, “In the name of the United States, I christen thee Brason. May you serve long and proud with distinction and honor.”

She swung the bottle, striking a special plate protruding from the bow just for the occasion. The bottle burst open, spraying cider all over. At that instant, the band began playing “Anchors Aweigh” and the ship began sliding backwards, ever so slowly at first and gained speed as she slid down the slipway into Elliott Bay.

When the stern splashed into the water, it caused a large wave that heaved up the slipway, pulling the ship the rest of the way. Once clear of the slipway, she slowed to a stop as she bobbed up and down in the water like child's bathtub toy. It all happened very quickly, although it seemed to play out in slow motion to the cheering crowd that watched.

Two tug boats chugged to her side and nudged her ever so gently up to the pier behind her partially completed sister ship. While she was being secured to the dock, the guests and dignitaries dispersed. For the workman, the break was over as they resumed work on the Brason.

The limousines that had brought the family to the shipyard took them back to the hotel. Now that the purpose of the trip had been accomplished, they were free to spend the rest of the week in the Seattle area. At the hotel, they changed their clothes and drove to the Space Needle and went up to the observation

deck, five hundred twenty feet above the street. From there they could see the entire city with Puget Sound, and Mount Rainer in the distance. It was clear enough that they could even see Mount St. Helen's farther to the south. They even found the shipyard where that had just been and had a bird's eye view of the Brason. After taking in the sights from the observation deck they went to the rotating SkyCity Restaurant one level below the observation deck. In the time that it took to place their orders, wait for them to be brought to them, and eat their meal, the restaurant went around one and half times.

On Thursday there was something that Sheffield wanted his family to see, something very important and something he had been part of. They took a ferry across Puget Pound to Bremerton and then got on a bus for the short ride to the piers where the Navy kept a host of mothballed ships in reserve. Among them were four older Essex Class carriers, including the Bon Homme Richard which had sailed in Sheffield's carrier divisions twice; once off Japan and once off Korea.

But what Sheffield wanted them to see was the Battleship Missouri, which was tied up next her sister ship, the New Jersey. The Missouri was open to the public and hosted about 180,000 visitors each year. Sheffield took his family aboard to see what was called the "surrender deck" where a bronze plaque memorialized the spot where Japan surrendered to the Allies in 1945 in Tokyo Bay and the accompanying historical display that included copies of the surrender documents and photos.

"You've heard me talk about being at Pearl Harbor more times than you care to remember, but as you also know I was here too. The table was right there." he said pointing to plaque on the deck. "I was standing about right here." he said as he walked to another spot on the deck. He then led them over to the displays and explained them to them and pointed out himself in a blowup of a picture that hung in the office in their home.

Satisfied that he had impressed on his family the importance of the events that he witnessed in that very spot thirty five years earlier, they caught another bus back to the ferry landing for the trip back across Puget Sound to Seattle. The afternoon was spent exploring Seattle and did a little shopping. That evening they took a dinner cruise on Puget Sound.

Then Friday morning, they checked out of the hotel and drove down to Tacoma because Ramona wanted to revisit what she considered to be her hometown and show the girls where she had lived. The apartment building where she and her mother lived had been torn down and replaced with something else. The old neighborhood in South Tacoma had become extremely run down.

She took them to the cemetery where both her mother and first husband were buried. It took a few minutes to find the section of the cemetery where their graves were located. Her mothers headstone was worn and faded, but could still be read. It simply said, "Paloma Erhart 1880 – 1930". Oliver's headstone

wasn't to far from Paloma's. His was in much better shape as the fire department took pride in keeping up the final resting places of its fallen heroes. The headstone had a Tacoma Fire Department shield engraved at the top. Below it read "Oliver Carl North – Born July 5, 1902, Gave His Life in the Line Duty March 8, 1924." She had completely forgotten the inscription "My Beloved Husband" that she had inscribed across the bottom.

After spending the day visiting her past, they went to the hotel where they had reservations for the night. Norma and Janet particularly appreciated seeing where their mother had lived.

On Saturday morning, they drove back up to the Tacoma-Seattle International Airport for the trip home. Sheffield and Ramona's flight left first, so they said their goodbyes there and boarded their flight home. When they arrived in Roanoke in the early afternoon, Craig, who had arranged to get off early, met them and took them home. That evening they had dinner with Craig and Edith and told them all about their trip.

The 4th of July was ten days later. Sheffield and Ramona and Craig, Edith, Tina, and Geoff, Brenda and Barry went to the Parade in Salem and had an afternoon barbecue in the trees down by the river. Craig shared their last letter from Todd who was still in San Luis Obispo. He said that as of the first of the month that the mission was being divided to form the California Ventura Mission and that he would be in the new mission. He said that he couldn't believe that he would be coming up on his hump day later in the month. Then that evening they went to watch the fireworks display.

The next notable event of the summer was their annual trip out west for the family reunion. Sheffield and Ramona flew out to Utah in the Staggerwing on the 31st of July, bringing Tina with them. They dropped her off in Burley so she could spend time with her sister. Sheffield and Ramona went on to Clarkston and spent ten days with Janet and her family before going on to Rexburg to spend time with Norma. Teresa was about a month away from having her baby. The family reunion was Wednesday the 16th through Saturday the 19th at Granite Creek. Craig and Edith, and Geoff and his family had flown out in Craig's Bonanza a few days earlier to spend time with Gean and her kids in Burley before the reunion. Janet and her family came up from Utah, as did Samantha and Collin, and Takara and Teancum. The entire family was there, except for Todd who had been transferred to Santa Barbara to be a zone leader. After the reunion, Sheffield and Ramona stayed a few more days with Norma and Wade before returning home on Wednesday the 22nd.

On Labor Day, Craig, Edith, Tina, and Geoff and his family came over for a barbecue. As they sat around talking, the fact that Teresa should be having her baby in a week or so came up. "Speaking of that," Brenda said, "we have some news of our own for you."

Ramona's jaw dropped as she reached across the picnic table to grasp Brenda's hand in anticipation

of what she was about to hear.

"I just found out a couple days ago that I'm pregnant."

"How exciting!" Ramona shrieked with excitement.

"That was quick." Craig said in amazement.

"Yeah." Geoff said. "I guess our wedding night went a little better than we thought."

The idea of what it takes to conceive a baby made Tina blush.

"So when are you due?" Edith wanted to know.

"The doctor figures around February twenty third."

So Sheffield and Ramona had yet another great grandchild to look forward to.

Several days later they received word that Teresa had her baby. Jeremy Roy Pendleton was born on the 16th of September. That now gave them four great grandchildren with one more on the way.

At the family reunion during the summer, the kids and grandkids had put their heads together and decided to host an open house for Sheffield's eightieth birthday rather than get together for either Thanksgiving or Christmas. So Sheffield and Ramona went over to Craig's for Thanksgiving. The next day, they all went up to the cabin to spend the night and to look for Christmas trees. This time they brought back three of them; including one for Geoff and Brenda.

The house was all decorated for Christmas by Sheffield's birthday on Thursday the 7th. The kids and grandkids all flew in that afternoon and had a private celebration with the immediate family that evening. That was the first time that Sheffield and Ramona got to see Jeremy. The fact that it was also Pearl's twelfth birthday was not overlooked.

The open house was the next day. They were busy getting ready all morning and had things ready by six o'clock when the first guests began arriving. Throughout the evening, family, friends, ward members, and neighbors streamed through. To his surprise Mace and Pat Owen had come down from Arlington, and Paula and Jacob Messner had come over from Norfolk.

The biggest surprise of the evening was when Takara and Teancum, who couldn't come the day before, arrived with Manti and Lolani. They had come to spend Thanksgiving and to see Christopher off on his mission to Japan, which was only fitting since he was three quarters Japanese. When they learned of Sheffield's open house, they extended their stay and made the trip to the east to see their old friend.

The celebration continued on Saturday. The only one missing was Todd. Then on Sunday the kids and grandkids all had to fly home, but Manti and Lolani stayed a few extra days since they had been promising for years to come. They attended church with the Brasons on Sunday and over the next couple of days, they showed them around before they returned home to Hawaii.

Since the family had been home for Sheffield's birthday, the holidays were rather low key. They spent Christmas day with Craig and his family and got to talk to Todd, who was still in Santa Barbara. One week after Christmas, 1979 arrived as just another year. By then Sheffield had seen a lot of years come and go.

The new year brought some changes to the Roanoke Stake nine years after it had been organized. President Winder and those who served with him were released in the middle of January. Rupert Casper who was serving as the Bishop of the Roanoke 1st Ward, was sustained as the new stake President. The Brasons knew him well; his wife, Misti, was Edith's older sister and was Geannie's niece. Also sustained that day as the 1st Counselor was Phil Moncur, who had been Sheffield's personal assistant during his final tour of service.

The best news of the new year was the birth of their fifth great grandchild on February 22nd. Brenda had a baby boy who they named Geoffrey Gordon Brason. To not be confused with his father, they chose to call him Gordon, which was Brenda's maiden name. But Gordon was too grown up sounding for a baby so everyone called him Gordy, but it didn't take long for some one to pin GG on him, which stuck.

As spring arrived, in March Sheffield sold the calves from last year and bought a new batch. He enjoyed watching them grow, not to mention the meat they provided. Red and Roxy were long gone, but Admiral and Blaze were still around. Like Sheffield, they too were getting old and had been semi retired; anymore they only rode them occasionally.

The horses didn't get out much, but the Staggerwing did. Sheffield still took it up quite often. It was still his preferred method for preparing to give patriarchal blessings. Any more he was giving two or three a month. Emily Barton was still his typist. He hoped to fly until the day he died, or as long as Dr. Hawkins continued to endorse his private pilots license.

On Easter Sunday, which was the 15th of April that year, Sheffield and Ramona got a call from Samantha with the exciting news that she was expecting in October. That would make great grandchild number six – not that it was about the numbers. Each and every one of them was delight. Dwayne was four and his little sister Lujana was nineteen months old. Barry was three. It didn't matter that he was adopted because they wouldn't have a family if it weren't for adoption. Craig, Norma, and Janet were all adopted and so were all of Janet's children. Jeremy was eleven month old and Little GG was already seven months old. Another one in October would be a welcome addition. Certainly there would be many more and there would be plenty of love for however many there would be.

Sheffield and Ramona were involved in the lives of all of their grandchildren. In May, Tina graduated from Salem High School and a few days later, Sheffield and Ramona flew to Utah in the Sataggerwing to

attend Wesley's graduation from Sky View High School in Smithfield. They only spent a few days since they would be back in August.

They got home in time for Memorial Day and went to the cemetery to decorate the graves and to have a barbecue with Craig and his family. Todd only had two and a half months left to his mission and to Sheffield's delight, he was now an Assistant to the President. His plan was attend Ricks College when he got home, so he really wouldn't be coming home, since school started two weeks after he was released. At least, they would be able to see him.

The following Sunday Craig and Geoff's families came over for Sunday dinner and to celebrate Ramona's seventy sixth birthday. She did get a call from the girls and the grandkids who lived out west. Sometimes having a continent come between them and the rest of the family was difficult. At least they got to see them at least twice a year, sometimes more if they were lucky. It helped that Craig had access to discount airline tickets, which were sometimes subsidized by Sheffield and Ramona.

The only thing that stood between the next trip to see the kids out west was the 4th of July, with all of its usual activities. Then on the 1st of August, Sheffield and Ramona flew to Utah in the Staggerwing and spent ten days with Janet and her family before making the short hop up to Rexburg to stay with Norma. While at Norma's, Sheffield gave Marty his patriarch blessing before beginning his senior year in the fall.

Then as they had done every year since discovering Granite Creek in 1969, and beginning the following year the whole family gathered there for the tenth time. Sheffield and Ramona went over with Norma and Wade with Teresa and Roy following right behind them on Wednesday the 15th. Soon after they got there, the rest of the family began arriving. The next to show up was Craig and Edith, Gean and Nathan, and Geoff and Brenda and their families. Craig, Edith, Tina, and Geoff and his family had flown out the day before and spent the night with Gean. They were followed by Janet and Jerry, Takara and Teancum, and Samantha and Collin, who had the farthest to travel. The only ones not there was Todd, who only had seven days left of his mission and Christopher who was in Japan. This reunion was much like the nine that had preceded it, only there were more of them and they took up more campsites.

On Saturday, they broke camp and went their various directions. Sheffield and Ramona went back to Rexburg and Craig and Edith went back to Burley for a few more days. On Wednesday afternoon, Sheffield and Ramona flew down to Burley and landed on the Betts' lane. They were met by Gean and Nathan, who took them to their home to wait for Craig and Edith to return from picking up Todd at the Twin Falls Airport. His entire family was waiting for his return at his sister's house in Burley, including his sister in law and two nephews that he had not yet met.

As he came into the house he looked great, with a good California sun tan. Like his brother before

him, he had that lost look of a returned missionary about him. Everyone clamored over him to give him a hug and to welcome him home. He was particularly surprised at how grown up Tina was after two years. That evening they celebrated the return of Elder Todd Brason from the California Ventura Mission. Gean made room for everyone to stay that night.

The next Day Sheffield and Ramona flew back to Virginia, bringing Geoff and his family with them. Craig and Edith stayed a few days longer and took Todd and Tina to Rexburg to get them settled. This was Todd's sophomore year at Ricks and Tina's freshman year. Since they would be living with Norma and Wade, they needed a way to get around, so Craig came up with another old car for them to share. It was a sporty 1973 Chevy Laugna. Craig had specific instructions for Todd to not dominate it and make sure that his sister got where she needed to be and could use it when she needed it.

The semester didn't start until the day after Labor Day, so they had a several days between the time that Craig and Edith left them there and when school started. As for the rest of the grandkids, Marty was a senior at Madison High School in Rexburg, Wesley was a freshman at the Utah State University in Logan, Andrea was a junior at Sky View High School in Smithfield, and Pearl was in the seventh grade.

As for Samantha and Collin, he began his senior year at BYU but since she would be having her baby soon, she forwent her senior year, hoping to someday finish her degree. As the days got deep into October, everyone waited with anticipation for news about her baby.

Finally, Ramona got a call from Norma that their sixth great grandchild, Matthew Collin Rogers was born on the 24th of October. That news was quickly followed by news that Gean was expecting her thrid in May. There other rublings in the wind as well. Craig reported that Todd had a serious girlfriend; someone that he actually met on his mission but got to know at Ricks. She was a sophomore, who was majoring in art.

Sheffield continued to rely on Walter Cronkite for what was going on in the world. The news that he reported always seemed to be one crisis or another; Military coups in El Salvador and Bolivia, Israeli minister of Foreign affairs Moshe Dayan resigned from office, a Western Airlines DC 10 crashed in Mexico Cilty killing seventy four people, an oil tanker spilled ten million gallons of oil into Galveston Bay. Ever since the Iranian revolution, Iran and thier hostility toward the west, particularly the United States was always in the news. The lead story on the 4th of November was the taking of ninety hostages at the US embassy in Terhan, culminating in the declaration by the Ayatollah Khomeini that the United States was "The Great Satan". Several days later, thirteen hostages were relaesed, but negotionans soon broke down and crisis seemed as if there was no resolution. Sheffield felt that President Carter was a weak and an ineffectual leader who was unprepaped and incapable of managing the crisis or the nation in general. Then when he

heard that Ronald Reagan had announced another bid for the White House, he felt hopeful.

As Thanksgiving approached, Sheffield and Ramona accepted an invitation to accompany Craig and Edith to Idaho to have Thanksgiving at Gean's house since all of their family, except for Geoff, were in Idaho and they had plans to have Thanksgiving with her family. They flew out on the 21st, the day before Thanksgiving and got there late in the afternoon. When they arrived, Todd and Tina had driven down from Rexburg and brought his girlfriend with them. They must have been getting serious if he brought her to meet the family. Rachel Reynolds was a pretty blond with about the prettiest teeth anyone had ever seen. She attributed them to the fact that her father was an orthodontist. She had just turned twenty years old and was from Torrence, California although she was born in Portland, Oregon while her father was finishing dental school.

He first met her while he was serving as a missionary in Torrence, although there was no attraction at the time. She was senior in high school then and was just another member of the ward. On occasion, he and his companion had been invited to her parents' home for dinner. They ran into each other soon after the beginning of the semester, but it took Todd a few weeks to ask her out and they just seemed to hit it off. She was a pleasant, well-mannered young lady who presented herself well and his parents and grandparents thought that she would be a good catch.

The day after Thanksgiving, Sheffield and Ramona rode back to Rexburg with Todd and Rachel, leaving Tina with her parents. Samantha and Collin were home for Thanksgiving and it was the first opportunity that Ramona had to see Matthew who was a month old already. On Saturday morning, Craig and Edith flew to Rexburg with Tina and dropped her off and picked up Sheffield and Ramona for the flight home.

Since Thanksgiving was early that year, they went up to the cabin the following week with Craig and Edith, and Geoff and his family to get their Christmas trees and over the next few days got decorated for the holidays. A week later, Sheffield's eighty first birthday was rather low key after the celebration the year before.

As the holidays drew near, Sheffield and Ramona looked forward to the family gathering together. Unfortunately, not everyone was able to come this time. Samantha and Collin didn't make the trip, nor did Gean and Nathan, or Takara and Teancum. But the rest were there. For Todd, it was the first time that he had been home since being released from his mission back in August. He finally got to report his mission in the Salem Ward on the 30th of December, with all of the family there, except of course those who couldn't come.

The holidays gave Norma and Wade a chance to spend time with the Rowans and to call on their

Diet Center franchises. It had been a good investment that that was paying off handsomely for them. And Norma was proof that it worked, as she had been able to keep her weight off ever since loosing it.

There was one final family gathering as they welcomed in 1980 together. For Sheffield the very thought of the year 1980 made him feel old all a sudden, even more so than the fact that he had just celebrated his eighty first birthday. To him, 1980 had always been some distant time way out in the future, now here it was. On New Years Day, those who had traveled to be there all had to go home to get back to work and school, except for Todd and Tina who stayed the rest of the week because they didn't have to be back until the 7th.

* * * * *

The USS Brason FFG 17 is a fictional ship of course. FFG 17 was the designation given the Australian frigate HMAS Adelaide while under construction at the Todd Pacific Shipyard in Seattle. All of the dates mentioned are those associated with the Adelaide. Those involved with the launching party were the actual people involved with the Adelaide's launch, except for Admiral Michaelis. I had him replace the Australian Admiral, since he had participated in the launch of the USS Frank Cable earlier that year. The ceremony is actually a composite of the launch of the Adelaide and the Frank Cable.

The launch of the Adelaide came from the August 1978 - Maritime Reporter and Engineering News found at <http://magazines.marinelink.com/Magazines/MaritimeReporter/197808/content/compliments-shipyards-australian-209734> and the launch of the the Frank Cable came from <http://mysite.verizon.net/vzeohzt4/Seaflags/customs/trads.html>. Other detailes of launcing ceremonies came from <http://www.navy.mil>

See The Business of War Chapter 44, for the story of the P-38 crashing into the Randolph.

The USS Missouri spent many years in the reserve fleet and was open to the public as described until she was recommissioned. After a number of years of active service, she was again decommissioned and is now a museum ship at Pearl Harbor.