

Chapter LXVI

Grounded

November 15, 1980 – November 14, 1981

Sheffield was happy to sit back and let someone else do the flying. When their flight from Seattle landed in Salt Lake City, Sheffield and Ramona rode home with Janet and Jerry and spent a week with them in Clarkston. While there, they got a letter from Wesley. He was still in his first area and was struggling with passing off his discussions, but other than that he was doing fine. On Friday night, Andrea had a date to a school dance and they got to meet the young man when he picked her up.

The following Saturday, they arranged to meet Norma and Wade at the park in Inkom, Idaho, about half way between Clarkston and Rexburg and went to spend a week with them. On the drive back to Rexburg, Wade wanted to know all about their trip to Seattle and the Brason. When they arrived that afternoon, after taking their luggage into the house, Norma took them across the driveway to Teresa's trailer house to see Britney and Whitney. The three week old twins had just come home from the hospital two days earlier. Both girls were doing well and each weighed just under six pounds. It was feeding time and they found Teresa with a baby at each breast.

With the babies occupied, two year old Jeremy got all of Ramona's attention. But when Whitney finished nursing, Norma took her from Teresa and handed her to Ramona to fuss over. "Oh, she's so tiny." she marveled. "Just look at her, she's so perfect."

After holding her new great granddaughter for a couple of minutes, Britney finished nursing. She handed Whitney to Sheffield and took Britney into her arms. "They look just exactly alike. How on earth do you tell them apart?"

"Its easy." Teresa explained. "When they were first born, the nurse tied a yellow ribbon around Britney's ankle and green ribbon around Whitney's ankle. But as they got a little bigger we noticed that for some reason Britney has a slightly more pronounced dimple in her chin."

"Let me see." Ramona said. "Sheffield, bring her here so we can put them next to each other."

After taking a closer look, she exclaimed, ""Okay, now I see the difference. Do you think as they grow it will always be that way?"

"Its hard to tell." Teresa replied. "But I can tell you this, Whitney seems to be a little more temperamental."

"I suggested giving them different tattoos, but you can imagine how that went over."

"Wade, that's terrible." Ramona scolded.

"I wasn't serious." he said in his own defense.

"You better not be."

After holding the babies for a few minutes, they both fell sound a sleep and Teresa took them an put in their crib.

“One things for sure.” Roy added. “Before they get much bigger, we're going to need a bigger house.”

After seeing the twins, Sheffield and Ramona went back over to Norma's house. A little later Tina came home from the library and they got to see her too. Ramona gave her a hug and said, “That one is from me.” She released he slightly and hugged her again, “And that one is from your mother.”

“Thanks Grandma. I needed both of them.”

They went on to talk about how school was going. “Your mom tells me that you've been seeing someone.” Ramona pried.

“Um huh.”

“Is it serious?”

“Kind of. You can meet him when he comes out for Thanksgiving.”

“Well, tell me all about him.”

While Tina was telling her grandmother all about her boyfriend, Sheffield asked Wade, “So, how's Marty doing? We haven't heard from anyone since we left home a couple of weeks ago.”

“Oh he's doing great.” Wade boasted. “Hopefully his visa will come through in the next few weeks and he can finally go to Brazil.”

On Sunday, Sheffield and Ramona went to church with them and spent the next few days visiting and Ramona helped Norma get things ready for Thanksgiving.

On Thursday morning Gean and Nathan and their three children drove up from Burley. Dwayne was almost five, Lujana had just turned three, and Justin was seven months old. Of course Teresa and Roy, who lived next door bundled up Jeremy and the twins and brought them them over and Samantha and Collin came out from town with Matthew who was thirteen months old. A little later Janet and Jerry and their two girls arrived. By the time everyone was there, they had a house full, especially with seven little ones, three of them babies.

The last to arrive was Tina's boyfriend, Mark Carter. Mark had grown up on a dairy farm near Preston, Idaho and was a year and a half older than Tina. He had returned from a mission to Argentina during the summer and had returned to Ricks College for his sophomore year. He was a polite and cordial young man. It was obvious that they really liked each other as there was a definite attraction between them. To those who knew what it was to truly be in love, the level of their relationship appeared to be more of an infatuation at that point.

Who knew what would become of it. Ramona whispered in Sheffield's ear, "If they were to get together, it could very well mean that she could end up out here too, especially if he wants to stay with the dairy."

Sheffield smiled and nodded his head. As it was, a good share of their family had ended up out west. Ever since Craig and Edith went to Ricks College thirty one years earlier, Rexburg seemed to draw their family there. It all began when Janet went to Ricks and married Jerry and settled in Clarkston. Then Wade was offered a job at Ricks College and moved to Rexburg. Most of the grandkids, beginning with Gean, attended Ricks College as well. It was there that Gean met Nathan and when they got married, she naturally settled in Burley where he farmed.

It was nice that her Aunt Norma lived so close, if you can call a hundred and fifty miles close. Gean was particularly close to Teresa and Samantha as they all had children about the same age. At one hundred forty five miles away, her Aunt Janet was also relatively close by and she was close to her as well. But most of all, she was glad that her little sister Tina was there, at least until the end of the school year. Now Tina had a boyfriend from Preston. If they were to get married, there was a good chance that she could end up in Idaho as well.

In response to Ramona's comment he whispered back, "Maybe we should move someplace in between."

Meanwhile, at about the same time Craig and Edith had Geoff and Brenda and their two kids, Todd and Rachel, and Edith's parents over for Thanksgiving clear on the other side of the continent. Sheffield and Ramona were glad to spend time with the western branch of their family tree and took advantage of the opportunity whenever they could. As for Sheffield, his roots were in Virginia and that meant so were Ramona's. After dinner and more visiting, Janet and Gean and their families left to go home in mid afternoon, but the rest stayed until late in the evening.

On Saturday, Norma and Wade saw Sheffield and Ramona off at the airport in Idaho Falls for their trip home. They first flew to Salt Lake for their connecting flight to Washington D.C., then on to Roanoke, where Craig and Edith met them. As they greeted them, Ramona had three hugs for Edith, one from her and one each from Gean and Tina. On the ride home, Edith wanted to know all about Tina's boyfriend.

After being away for two weeks, it was good to be home again. The first thing that Ramona did was to have a relaxing soak in her bathhouse. Naturally they went to church on Sunday and then spent the next week catching up on things from when they were gone and got a start on decorating for Christmas. Then on Friday afternoon, they went up to the cabin with Craig and Edith, Geoff and Brenda and their boys, and Todd and Rachel to spend the night. The next morning, they scouted around for the perfect Christmas trees

and by noon were headed back down off the mountain with four trees, one for each of them. By the end of the day Sheffield and Ramona had their tree decorated and were ready for Christmas.

On Sunday afternoon, after Craig was finished with his responsibilities for the day, he and Edith, Geoff and Brenda and their boys, and Todd and Rachel came over for Sunday dinner and to celebrate Sheffield's eighty second birthday. He was six months older than what his father and brother Walt had lived to be and he wondered how many more birthdays he had left. He was in good health for his age. Although he was a little stooped, he had his strength and could still do most things that he put his mind to but was slower than he used to be. However a lot of the things that needed done on the ranch he pretty much left to Craig and his boys. Most importantly, his mind was clear and his memory was sharp. He did worry that his response time and reflexes were were slowing down and wondered how long he could continue flying. During the course of the afternoon and evening, the telephone rang several times as the kids and grandkids out west all called to wish him a happy birthday as well.

During the next two and half weeks, Sheffield and Ramona enjoyed the Christmas season: listening to the music on the radio and watching the Christmas specials on television. One Tuesday night for Mutual the youth in the ward stopped by as they were out caroling, which added to the spirit of the season.

Ricks College let out on the Friday the 19th and the next day Norma and Wade flew home with Tina and Gean and her family to spend the holidays. Teresa and Samantha were spending Christmas with their respective in laws and Takara and Teancum were in Hawaii. At least Craig's family were all together, for few days at least before Todd and Rachel flew to California to spend Christmas with the Reynolds. Janet and Jerry didn't come until Christmas Eve since Andrea and Pearl didn't get out of school until the 23rd.

Gean and her family naturally stayed with Craig and Edith. Janet and Jerry stayed with Sheffield and Ramona, while Norma and Wade split their time between Sheffield and Ramona and Roger and Chantell since all of his family were together, including Jolene and Sedric who had also come from Idaho. They also took some time to look in on their Diet Centers.

Sheffield and Ramona received a Christmas card form Commander Reubens two days before Christmas informing them that the Brason was sailing on Saturday the 20th for Long Beach and was due to arrive there on Christmas Eve. They were to remain there until the first part of February before sailing for their shakedown cruise.

On Christmas Eve the Brasons, except for Norma and Wade, all got together at Sheffield and Ramona's. Then on Christmas Day, which was on Thursday, they all came over. Wesley, knowing that his family would be in Virginia for Christmas, called; collect of course. A couple of weeks earlier, he had been transferred to McLaughlin, South Dakota to serve on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation. Sheffield

answered the phone and got to talk to him before handing the the phone to Janet. Next Jerry got to talk talk to him for a moment, then his sisters, and finally Ramona. Wesley was admittedly a little homesick for he found himself in a desolate, isolated place on Christmas. He did say that he was well received on the reservation due to the fact that he was half Indian himself, albeit he was Ute while the majority of those on the reservation were Sioux.

Later in the day, they got a call from Marty in Boston, who also called collect. That time Ramona answered the telephone and got to talk to him first. He had reason to be hopeful that his visa would be coming through in the next two or three weeks and would finally be on his way to Brazil. After talking to his grandmother for a moment, he got to talk to his mom and dad and his sisters, and Sheffield got to talk to him last.

Jerry had to return home on Saturday to take care of things at the ranch, since the ewes would begin lambing any day. Then on Monday Todd and Rachel returned from California. Thursday was New Years Eve and they welcomed in 1981. On New Years day Janet and the girls had to return home as well since they had to go back to school on the 2nd. The rest stayed the remainder or the week and the weekend and flew home on Monday the 5th.

During the middle of January, Norma called to say that Marty's visa came through and he finally got to go to Brazil. He flew to Rio de Janeiro on the 14th and the next day was sent on an eight hour bus ride to Belo Horizonte, a city of just over two and half million people two hundred seventy miles north of Rio. His companion was Brazilian who didn't speak any English. Fortunately during the time he was in Boston, he had time to work on the language and was getting by reasonably good.

Sheffield and Ramona settled in to watch the festivities surrounding the inauguration of Ronald Reagan as the fortieth President of the United States. As they sat in front of the television, Sheffield got to thinking.

"You know, When I was born, William McKinley was the twenty fifth President of the United States. That means that during my life time there have been fifteen presidents, Reagan will make sixteen."

"Is that a fact, Babe." Ramona replied, "Then you've got one on me. Teddy Roosevelt was President when I was born."

"Of the sixteen, I actually knew three of them. I met Hoover way back when, when Geannie got him to come and campaign for her father when he was running for the Senate. I met Ike in Algiers during the War, and I met Reagan when he starred as me in "Neptune's Realm."

After taking the oath of office, President Reagan was about to have lunch with Congressional leaders in Statuary Hall in the Capitol building when he received word about the plane carrying the fifty two

American hostages had left Iranian airspace after being held captive for four hundred forty four days. After three months of negotiations, an agreement had been reached in Algiers just the day before to release the hostages and in return, the United States would unfreeze Iranian assets. During the luncheon, he broke the news saying: "Some 30 minutes ago, the planes bearing our prisoners left Iranian air space, and they're now free of Iran." As one last slap in the face to President Carter, the Iranian government waited until after his term had officially expired to honor their commitment to release the hostages.

Sheffield and Ramona watched the celebrations throughout Washington and the country, to mark the inauguration and the release of the hostages. For the only time, the national Christmas tree near the White House was lighted on an Inauguration Day, and it was done to mark the release of the hostages. People across the country wrapped yellow ribbons around trees and plastered freedom messages on billboards to welcome the freed hostages home. The yellow-ribbon became a symbol of the solidarity of Americans with the hostages. The very next day, President Reagan sent former President Carter to Germany as an emissary of the United States to greet the hostages.

After the national celebrations, Sheffield and Ramona celebrated their thirty seventh anniversary on Thursday the 22nd of January. Thirty seven years wasn't a big milestone like the anniversaries that were multiples of five or ten, but it was for them since they had got a late start. Those thirty seven years were preceded by a friendship that dated back more than fifty years altogether. During that time they could have never foreseen the events that brought them together, even though she had been secretly in love him ever since soon after she was widowed for the second time.

Nor at the time that they were married, could they have ever guessed that they would have children of their own, let alone grandchildren and great grandchildren. Craig, Norma, and Janet were one of the greatest blessings that came their way since they got married. Now they were all grown up with children and grandchildren of their own. They had just learned that their tenth great grandchild was on its way as Geoff and Brenda were expecting their third child in June. It was hard to believe that Janet, who was only eleven years old when they became a family, had just turned forty five in two days earlier.

The other great blessing was finding the Church in the miraculous way that they did when Geannie came to them one night to prepare them for what they were about to stumble across. Because of that, they had been blessed in countless ways and to have the tremendous opportunities that came their way over the years.

Geannie had always been a big part of thier relationship as from time to time they felt her presence and influence in their lives. Romona loved Geannie as well, for she had been her best friend and the most positive influence for good and change in her life. She had felt guilty for being in love with with her husband,

but showed great restraint in burying her feelings and not acting upon them, never dreaming that one day she would be free from the burden that she carried and she could share him with her. It didn't bother Ramona that he still loved Geannie, after all she was the great love of his life; and he was the great love or Ramona's life. Despite that fact, she knew that Sheffield loved her wholly and completely and had cherished her all of those thirty seven years and would for the rest of their lives, however long that might be, and in the next life when they rejoined Geannie.

Toward the end of the month, Sheffield and Ramona received a letter from Commander Reubens telling them that the Brason was sailing on the 4th of February for her shakedown cruise off the coast of Southern California and Mexico. Then one night towards the end of February while watching the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite, Sheffield was surprised by a story being reported.

Walter Cronkite began, "An now for a harrowing rescue at sea." As he said that, a picture of a Perry Class frigate was displayed over his shoulder. The number seventeen on the hull at the bow identified the ship as the Brason. Sheffield sat up in his La-Z-Boy and called for Ramona.

Together, they listened intently as the story continued. "This morning, the US guided missile frigate Brason responded to a distress call from the M.S. Fiesta Paradise, a Los Angeles based cruise ship bound for Acapulco. Before dawn while two hundred fifty miles south of Cabo San Lucas, an explosion and fire in the engine room disabled the thirty year old ship leaving it listing and taking on water as the fire spread out of control, forcing the nearly seven hundred passengers and crew to abandon ship.

"The Brason, which had just departed Manzanillo, Mexico, the headquarters of the Mexican Pacific Fleet, the previous day after a port visit, was less than one hundred miles from the stricken ship when the call was received and reached the site less than four hours later to find the ship abandoned and on fire but still afloat, surrounded by lifeboats filled to capacity and immediately began conducting rescue operations.

"After bringing the survivors aboard and providing medical attention for non life threatening conditions, the Brason was ordered to sink the drifting hulk, using her three inch gun. The frigate is currently enroute to Cabo San Lucas to disembark the survivors from where they will be flown back to Los Angeles.

"Paradise Cruise Lines, the owner and operator of the five hundred twenty seven foot Fiesta Paradise, has promised to compensate the passengers for their lost belongings and the cost of the fare, plus a yet to be determined sum of money."

"Well what do you know?" Sheffield said in astonishment. "She's only on her shakedown cruise and she's already made a difference."

The Brason returned to Long Beach in mid March after her shake down cruise.

One of the reasons Sheffield had hoped that Ronald Reagan would be elected was because he

knew that he was an advocate of a strong military, especially the Navy. During President Carter's administration the size of the military had shrunk considerably, while the Soviet Union had expanded theirs. The Navy particularly had taken a hit. In early March, President Reagan put forth his 1982 fiscal year budget which called for a "600 ship Navy" over the next five years to counter the expansion of Soviet naval power. Sheffield found it interesting that his proposed force levels included a blast from the past. The expansion called for the reactivation of the carriers, Oriskany and Reprisal plus the four Iowa class battleships.

The logic behind reactivating the two carriers was that they could be available much faster than it would to build new ones. The idea was almost immediately met with opposition from Congress and surprisingly many within the Navy. As much as Sheffield loved the Reprisal and advocated naval aviation, he could see their point. They were old to begin with, but more importantly they were too small to operate modern aircraft. Sheffield realized that the conclusion of the debate would decide the fate of the Reprisal. If she was deemed unfit for further service, she would most likely be scrapped; an ignominious end for such a great ship.

Sheffield liked the other policies that President Reagan was putting in place as well, particularly in regard to the economy. He believed that Reagan could truly turn the country around. That hope appeared to have been shattered at the end of March, on the 30th to be exact. Sheffield was outside tending to some chores when Ramona came out to him. The pale look in her face and her trembling hand over her mouth told him that what she had to tell him was not good.

"The President has been shot." she said.

"What?" Sheffield asked in disbelief.

"They just announced it over the radio, President Reagan has been shot."

"When?"

"I guess just a few minutes ago. Evidently he had just given a speech to the AFL-CIO at a hotel in Washington. As he was leaving the hotel, someone shot him."

Sheffield left what he was doing undone and went back into the house and turned on the TV to see what was going on. Since Walter Cronkite had retired earlier in the month, Sheffield didn't trust Dan Rather, who replaced him, because of his scathing attacks on Nixon during the Watergate investigation. As a result, Sheffield turned to ABC and Frank Reynolds for his news source. The information was still sketchy but evidently the President, his press secretary James Brady, and a Washington D.C. police officer had been shot. By that time, the presidential limousine was taking Reagan to George Washington University Hospital.

They watched the tragic drama play out on television. "It's JFK in sixty three all over again." Ramona murmured.

As those reporting the events as they happened attempted to figure out what was going on, it was reported that James Brady had died from a head wound. A short time later it was reported that the President had died as well. Sheffield was devastated. As they continued to watch the national tragedy play out, it was discovered that the information was incorrect. Frank Reynolds appeared noticeably upset and, looking around at staffers in the background of the newsroom, angrily burst out, "Let's get it nailed down...somebody...let's find out! Let's get it straight so we can report this thing accurately!"

Sheffield, and the entire nation, were relieved to learn that President Reagan was very much alive and was expected to make a full recovery. He had been shot in the chest and in the lower left arm. A single bullet had passed through in his left arm and struck him in the chest, grazing a rib and lodging in his lung, stopping nearly one inch from his heart. He suffered a punctured lung and had heavy internal bleeding, but prompt medical attention allowed him to recover quickly.

Following surgery, the prospects for a full recovery were excellent. Sheffield commented, "Well it looks the curse is broken."

"What curse?" Ramona asked.

"You know, the 'Twenty Year Curse'. Every president elected in a year divisible by twenty since eighteen forty has died in office."

"Is that a fact. I guess I didn't realize that."

"Sure. It all began with William Henry Harrison. He was elected in eighteen forty, but on his inauguration day he caught pneumonia and died four weeks later. Abraham Lincoln was elected in eighteen sixty and everyone knows what happened to him. Then James A. Garfield was elected in eighteen eighty and was assassinated in eighteen eighty one."

"I know about him." Ramona interrupted. "Did you know that he didn't actually die from the gunshot?"

"No I guess I didn't. So what did he die from."

Ramona explained. "Two months after being shot, he died of a heart attack brought on by blood poisoning and other complications resulting from the gunshot wound. So, who was next?"

"William McKinley. He was re-elected in nineteen hundred and was assassinated in nineteen oh one."

"Did you know that he didn't die from being shot either?"

"No. I didn't know that either. So what did he die from?"

"He died from gangrene eight days later."

"How come you know so much about this?"

"The subject came up once in nursing school and for some reason, I remembered it. Go on, who

was next?"

"Warren G. Harding." Sheffield replied. "He was elected in nineteen twenty and died in office in nineteen twenty three."

"I remember that." Ramona said. "There was some speculation that his wife had poisoned him because he was having an affair, but the evidence pointed to congestive heart failure."

Sheffield continued, "Then FDR was re-elected to his third term in nineteen forty and died in forty five, and lastly Kennedy was elected in nineteen sixty and was assassinated in sixty three."

"That's very interesting." Ramona said. "I didn't realize that there was a pattern to all of this. I'm just thankful that President Reagan is going to be alright."

During the first part of April there was some good news and some bad news. First for the good news, Samantha announced that she and Collin were expecting their second child in September. That would be their eleventh great grandchild. Now for the bad news. Beautiful, young, and vibrant Rachel was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. MS is more common in women than men and is diagnosed between the ages of twenty and forty. She was just twenty one and a half at the time.

Naturally, she and Todd were devastated, but after coming to grips with the reality, Rachel bravely decided to take it head on and decided to make the most of her life anyway. It first appeared when she experienced a tingling sensation in her arms and legs, which only lasted a little while and went away so she thought nothing of it. But it reoccurred again a few weeks later, accompanied with weakness and unsteadiness as she walked. That attack prompted her to see the doctor and that is when it was diagnosed.

There was no cure for it, but she was put on medication that helped control the symptoms, but would not prevent future attacks which could vary in symptoms and intensity. The good news was that between attacks she could expect the symptoms to go away completely. The other good news was that it is a progressive disease, so while she was still young, she could enjoy good health for the most part, but as she aged it would get worse and no one could predict the course the disease would take. She was told that it would likely take ten years off her normal life expectancy. When they got married eight months earlier their plan was to wait until Todd was finished with school to have children. With this turn in events, they decided to go ahead and have children while she was still in reasonably good health.

That wasn't the only bad news. Edith's father, Stirling, who had not been well for some time took a turn for the worse when he fell and broke his hip at eighty five. After he was released from the hospital he had to go to a nursing home and was not doing very well at all. His doctor told Mary Ann that there was a good possibility that he wouldn't be going home and to make the best of the situation as it was.

For the first time in nearly six years, the United States sent two astronauts into space. Sheffield

followed closely the maiden spaceflight of the Space Shuttle Columbia. The first launch attempt was scrubbed due to a computer glitch and had to be postponed for two days. Before getting ready for church on Sunday, the 12th of April, Sheffield turned on the television to watch the launch. The whole approach was different from previous manned space flights. The Columbia had a giant liquid fuel tank attached to its under section, which had two solid fuel boosters on either side, all of which were reusable.

Lift off occurred at precisely seven o'clock and achieved orbit a few minutes later. After watching the post launch coverage, Sheffield got ready and went to church. Over the next two days he watched what news coverage was available. It's primary mission was to perform a general check out of the Space Shuttle's systems, accomplish a safe ascent into orbit and to return to Earth for a safe landing.

Two days later on Tuesday afternoon, Sheffield watched ABC's coverage of Columbia's return to earth. As apposed to the test flight of the Space Shuttle Enterprise four years earlier, Columbia had to endure the intense heat of re-entry, Rather than have a heat shield like on the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo space capsules, the entire bottom of the shuttle was covered in heat tiles designed to keep it from incinerating during re-entry.

After a successful re-entry, Columbia glided through the atmosphere, piloted by the astronauts and touched down like an airplane on the runway at Edwards Air Force Base in California and came to a stop at one twenty one Eastern Standard Time. The mission was dubbed a complete success. The part that fascinated Sheffield was that Columbia was to be returned to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida for its next space flight scheduled for October.

The following week, Sheffield, Ramona, Craig, and Edith had plans to fly out west to attend Tina's graduation from Ricks College. Easter Sunday was on the 19th that year. After church, Sheffield and Ramona went over to Craig's for Sunday dinner with them, Geoff and Brenda and their boys and Todd and Rachel. The next morning, they took off in the Staggerwing and headed west. Geoff and Todd both had work and school as they were finishing up their semester at Virginia Tech. Stirling and Mary Ann weren't able to go either since he was confined to the nursing home. His health continued to deteriorate and it was only a matter of time, perhaps only a few weeks.

Sheffield flew the first leg of the flight. After having lunch and refueled in Springfield, Illinois, Craig flew the second leg. Sheffield was glad to have Craig along on this flight to relieve him at the controls. After refueling in McCook, Nebraska, Sheffield took the controls and flew the rest of the way. Later in the afternoon, they landed at the Betts farm south of Burley.

He didn't say anything to either Craig or Ramona that he had been having difficulties, especially with landings. He brought the plane down without any incident and the landing seemed routine to everyone else

but it caused him to wonder how long he would be able to keep flying.

Gean and the kids were there to meet them at Randal and Susan's house. After fusing over the Dwayne, Lujana, and Justin, Sheffield and Ramona got back in the plane and took off again, leaving Craig and Edith to spend a couple of days with Gean before coming up for Tina's graduation.

When Sheffield and Ramona landed at the airport in Rexburg a little while later, Wade was there to meet them and take them home. Dinner was ready and waiting for them and they were joined by Teresa and Roy and Samantha and Collin. The only one missing was Marty, who was still serving in Belo Horizonte.

Naturally the first thing that Ramona did was to hold the twins. Britney and Whitney were now almost six months old. They had grown a lot since she had seen them last at Thanksgiving. Two and half year old Jeremy and eighteen month old Matthew also got their share of their great grandmother's attention as well.

Tina and Mark were there as well. This time their relationship appeared to be much, much more than infatuation. They both had the glow of love about them and could hardly take their eyes off each other, nor could they let go of one another. They were definitely in love. Tina had told her folks that their relationship had become quite serious. The only thing that kept Mark from proposing was meeting her parents and asking her father for his consent.

Norma and Wade had got to know him well, as he came out with Tina often, and vouched for him. Beside that, he was in Wade's animal health class. Sheffield and Ramona had meet him at Thanksgiving, but Craig and Edith still hadn't met him yet, but Tina had told them all about him.

On Tuesday and Wednesday while Wade finished up the semester, Sheffield and Ramona got to spend time with Norma, Teresa, and Samantha and the great grandchildren. Then on Wednesday evening, Craig and Edith rode up with Gean and Nathan and their kids. Nathan was right in the middle of planting beets, but took the time off to attend his sister-in-law's graduation.

Finally Craig and Edith got to meet Mark. It was obvious to them that they were in love. They had a chance to learn more about him and his plans to work on the family dairy. When he had a chance to talk to Tina alone, Craig cautioned, "If you marry this guy, you do realize that he'll be married to those cows too, don't you?"

To which she replied, "I know that they work long hours. I've been to their place a number of times and they make it a family affair. Its not like they're clear across the world."

"You really love him don't you?"

"Oh yes Dad. I do. There is something he wants to talk to you about."

"I suppose there is."

After talking to Tina, Craig pulled Mark aside for what he called, "A little chat." He learned a great

deal more about Mark and concluded that he was an outstanding young man. At the end of their conversation, Mark asked for Tina's hand in marriage.

Thursday was graduation day. It was very much like Todd's graduation the year before and every other Ricks College graduation they had attended over the years, only the weather was half way decent this time. Afterwards, Norma and Wade hosted a family celebration at their home, to which the Carters were invited. It gave Craig and Edith a chance to get acquainted with Mark's family. With both families together, Mark asked Tina to marry him, to which she said, "Yes".

When the question of when and where was posed to the newly engaged couple, after some quick family conferences, the answer was in the Logan Temple on the 15th of August in conjunction with the family reunion when everyone would be there. Sensing Craig and Edith's apprehension of another daughter living so far away from them Mark's parents, Marilyn and Linda Carter, invited the Brasons to come down to Preston the next day to see their place and to make plans for the wedding. Late that afternoon, Gean and Nathan returned home and the Carter's returned to Preston. Tina got the rest of her things together so she could go home.

The next morning, Craig, Edith, and Tina drove down to Preston in her 1973 Chevy Lauguna while Sheffield and Ramona said goodbye to Norma and Wade and flew down to Clarkston to spend a couple of days with Janet and Jerry. Craig and Edith spent a couple of days as guests of the Carter's during which time the rest details for the wedding were finalized. While Edith and Tina were busy with the arrangements, Craig was given a tour of the Carter's dairy operation.

Their place was four miles south of Preston and two miles north of the Utah border. It was much more than the run of the mill dairy that just milked cows. They milked cows alright, about two hundred head. They also had a large farm on which they grew all of their own feed; hay, barley, and corn. But that wasn't all. They had their own processing plant where they pasteurized and bottled the milk for distribution. They also made cheese and ice cream. Not only that, they did their own distribution which included home delivery and wholesaling to grocery stores and other outlets in Northern Cache Valley in both Idaho and Utah. Hence the name of their business was Idatah Dairy.

Once Mark and Tina were married, he would be taking over as the plant foreman, responsible for the processing employees with the supervisors reporting to him. Craig was relieved to know that he wouldn't just be milking cows. In addition he learned that Tina and Mark would be living in the original farm house that would be remodeled before they got married.

Confident that Tina was marrying into a good family and that she would be in good hands, on Sunday morning the three of them drove the fifteen miles from the Carters to Wayne Gover's home in

Clarkston. Sheffield and Ramona already had their luggage loaded into the Staggerwing which was parked in the pasture. They loaded Craig and Edith's luggage and the things that Tina was taking home with her. She left her car and most of her things there so she would have them when she got married. With Craig at the controls and Sheffield in the front passenger seat, they took off and flew home so Craig could be to work on Monday morning.

Nine days after returning from Idaho, Edith's father and Sheffield's long time friend and former brother-in-law passed away at the age of eighty five. Stirling was surrounded by his wife, Mary Ann, and their seven children and their spouses, Edith being the youngest. Stirling and Sheffield's brother, Walt, were the same age and growing up they were best friends. Sheffield, who naturally gravitated to Walt, tagged along with them and he and Stirling were also very close friends. Being Geannie's brother solidified their friendship.

As they grew up, Sheffield married Geannie and Walt married Sarah, who was Stirling and Geannie's cousin. Geannie and Sarah had a friend named Lorraine Wheeler who became Stirling's first wife. Of the three, Stirling and Lorraine were the first to be married, as she had dropped out of high school to get married. Tragically, she died in childbirth at the age of eighteen, leaving him a widower with a tiny baby to care for.

Stirling married Mary Ann thirteen months later. She was almost two years older than him and was a widow with a child the same age as his, who he adopted. They had been married for sixty three years and at nearly eighty seven, Mary Ann wasn't in very good health herself, although she still lived in their home.

Gean and her family flew home from Idaho to attend her Grandpa Austin's funeral on Saturday the 9th which was held at the Roanoke Stake Center with his son-in-law, President Rupert Casper presiding and the Bishop of the Roanoke 1st Ward officiating. All of their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren were there. Some like Gean had moved away, but the majority of them still lived in the area. All of the Austins were there as were the Brasons. Sheffield and Ramona accompanied the family to the cemetery and returned with them to the church for the luncheon. It was almost like one of the old Austin/Brason 4th of July reunions at the cabin.

Later in the month, Sheffield and Ramona were off on another trip out west. This time to attend Andrea's graduation. They took off from the Two Star Ranch on Monday the 19th accompanied by Tina, who was tagging along so she could spend the week with Mark. After the routine trip, they landed in Wayne Gover's pasture and taxied up to the house. Janet was there to meet them and take them home. Tina stayed long enough to say hello before she got in her car and drove to the Carters.

Sheffield and Ramona spent the week with Janet and Jerry, which happened to be a slow time on

the ranch. It wasn't yet time to ship off the lambs and the first cutting of hay was still two weeks away, but both Andrea and Pearl were in school until Wednesday. While they were there, Janet and Jerry got a letter from Wesley saying that he had just been transferred from the reservation to Fargo, North Dakota. Andrea's graduation was on Thursday in Smithfield. Her plans were to attend Utah State University in Logan in the fall.

They spent Friday and Saturday in Salt Lake City and went to church on Sunday in the Clarkston Ward. Monday was Memorial Day, a cold windy miserable day as was often the case. Then on Tuesday morning, Tina returned from Preston, with Mark for the trip home. During the flight, Sheffield and Ramona got to know him better. It was obvious how in love they were with each other.

He spent a week in Virginia, during which time, they continued to plan their wedding. During that week, Geoff graduated from Virginia Tech with his bachelors degree. Mark spent the weekend and attended church with Tina in the Salem Ward so she could show him off. Then on Monday he flew home.

On Wednesday, Ramona celebrated her seventy eighth birthday. She still colored her hair her natural hair color and had developed a few wrinkles in her face. Her gift of youth continued to grace her appearance as she looked to be in her early sixties. She was in excellent health and quite active, still volunteering one day a week at the hospital and loved to drive around in her Mustang, with the top down. Her doctor was amazed, and told her that he wouldn't be surprised if she lived to be a hundred.

That evening Craig and his family came over to celebrate it with her and Norma and Janet called to wish her a happy birthday. Geoff and Brenda were looking forward to the arrival of their baby any day. Five year old Barry was excited about it and wanted another brother, but two year old GG was indifferent to the notion. As for Brenda, she felt outnumbered by boys and really wanted a girl. Todd and Rachel were still trying to get pregnant.

"Maybe you're not doing it right." Ramona teased. "Do I need to explain it to you."

"Oh we've got it figured out." Todd blushed.

"Well then, maybe you need to do it more often." she quipped. Todd blushed even more.

"I'm not getting pregnant, but we sure are having fun. We've tried it just about every way we can think of." Rachel shot back.

Now it was Ramona who was blushing.

"Just think of all of the fun that you and Mark have to look forward to." Brenda said to Tina, causing the bride to be to blush as well.

About that time, Sheffield changed the subject.

Ten days later, Brenda went into labor and on the evening of June 13th, little Amy Nicole Brason was

born at the Lewis Gale hospital in Salem. She got the baby girl that she had wanted, and Sheffield and Ramona got their fourth great granddaughter and tenth great grandchild.

Commander Reubens had been faithful in communicating with Sheffield and Ramona and kept them informed about the Brason. Ever since returning from her shakedown cruise, she had been conducting a series of trials, qualifications, and certifications preparatory to her final acceptance by the Navy. He was pleased to inform them that she had successfully completed the final acceptance trials late in June and the Navy had accepted the frigate. The Brason was at that time in the Todd Pacific San Pedro shipyard, where she would be for three months. At the conclusion of that period, she would be fully operational.

There wasn't too much excitement for the next couple of months. It was nice lazy summer for the most part. Sheffield and Ramona made their once a month trips to the temple in Washington and the other usual things. Sometimes they flew up in the Staggerwing, sometimes they drove. Lately it seemed that they took the later option as Sheffield was loosing his confidence at the controls, but kept his worries to himself. On some of their trips they stayed with Mace and Pat, but usually went up and back in a day.

They joined Craig and his family for their 4th of July picnic and activities. Tina missed Mark and looked forward to their wedding with anticipation. In July, Rachel had another bad spell due to MS. Marty was transferred from Belo Horizonte to Brasilia. Teresa and Roy bought a house up the road and around the corner from Norma and Wade. On the 4th of August, Craig celebrated his fiftieth birthday, and Edith's was five days later.

Then on Friday the 7th of August, Sheffield and Ramona took off in the Staggerwing for their annual trip out west to see the girls and the family reunion. When they took off from the Two Star Ranch, Tina accompanied them and when they landed in Clarkston, she drove up to Preston to stay with Mark and his family and to get ready for the wedding. As for Sheffield and Ramona, they spent the week with Janet and Jerry.

The following Friday, the 14th of August was Tina's big day. Craig and Edith and Geoff and his family flew out in his Bonanza a couple of days earlier, while Todd and Rachel, who was now feeling better, flew to Salt Lake on a commercial airliner on Thursday. On the morning of the wedding, they drove in to Logan where they met up with Gean and Nathan and Norma and Wade, as well as Mark's family at the temple. Andrea and Pearl looked after the children while the rest went through the temple.

The scene after the wedding was a familiar one. Everyone anxiously waited for the bride and groom to come out. When they did, they had pictures taken before going to the Blue Bird Café on Main Street in Logan. Then it was time to get ready for the reception at the Preston Tabernacle.

The tabernacle was a unique building with a octagonal tower next to the front door, opposite of the

chapel. The cultural hall was decorated in a simple, yet tasteful manner. The reception line stood in front of a lattice backdrop as they greeted the wedding guests. The Carters were a well known family in the community and there was a good turnout. Sheffield and Ramona enjoyed mingling with their friends, neighbors, ward members, employees and customers.

After the reception, Tina and Mark left for an undisclosed location to spend their wedding night and begin their honeymoon. The Brason's all went to Clarkston to spend the night with Janet and Jerry. They had people stuffed into every nook and cranny. So much so that some had to stay with Wayne and Gail. After attending church Sunday morning, they all left to go home. After spending a week with them, Sheffield and Ramona flew to Rexburg to spend the next several days with Norma and Wade, while Craig and Edith flew to Burley to spend a few days with Gean and Nathan.

When Sheffield and Ramona arrived at Norma and Wade's house, the HUD trailer that saw them through the clean up after the flood and which had been Teresa and Roy's first home was gone and the pad where it sat had been planted to grass. Only the utility pole marked its place. Teresa was happy to show them their new home, which was up the road to the north and around the corner to the west about a half a mile. They were still in the same ward after it had been divided the previous year.

They had a couple of days to spend with the grandkids and great grandchildren before leaving for the family reunion. All of Norma's family were there except for Marty who was in Brazil. From his letters, it sounded as if he was having a good mission. Samantha was less than a month from her due date and was very uncomfortable.

Then on Wednesday, Sheffield and Ramona accompanied Norma and Wade to Granite Creek for the family reunion and got set up. Later in the afternoon, some of the others including Craig and Edith and Gean and Nathan arrived from Burley. The rest, including the newlyweds showed up the next day. The whole family which now numbered forty, incounting Takara's family of five. They were all there except for Wesley, Marty, and Christopher who were all serving missions. With that many people, they practically took over the swimming pool when they all got in.

As with past years there was plenty to do. Not being up to the more strenuous hike, Sheffield took some of the younger kids on a little hike up to the falls while some of the others were off on more adventuresome outings. Every evening was spent around a central camp fire, telling stories and singing. As always, Friday was set a side for a trip into Jackson Hole. Then on Saturday, everyone went there own ways. For most, it was back home. Craig and Edith and their sons and their families went back to Burley with Gean and Nathan and flew back home on Sunday without Tina. She and Mark were all settled into the newly remodeled old farmhouse at the dairy. Sheffield and Ramona, on the other hand stayed with Norma

and Wade a few more days. They attended church with them and during the middle of the week, the four of them took a day trip to Yellowstone. Finally on Friday the 29th, they took off in the Staggerwing for the trip home.

On the trip out, Sheffield didn't have any problems, but on the way back he almost overshot the runway at McCook because he was too slow in lowering the flaps to slow the plane in its decent. It was a simple thing that was hardwired into his nervous system, like an automatic reflex. This time, to his concern, he was just too slow. If Ramona noticed, she didn't say anything. When they landed, he took a deep breath to calm his nerves. After lunch when they took off again, Sheffield didn't have any further issues the rest of the way home, however he was sure to pay more attention to details rather than rely on his automatic responses.

Toward the end of the next week, Tina and Mark and his parents arrived for their second reception, which was held on Friday the 5th of September at the Stake Center. This one was also kept simple but was nicely done. This time it was the Brason's turn to show off the bride and groom as their friends, neighbors, and extended family, which included all of the Brasons and the Austins, came to wish them well. Tina and Mark, and Marilyn and Linda Carter stayed through the long weekend and went to Church in the Salem Ward on Sunday came to Craig's Labor Day picnic held in the trees down in the pasture along the river. It was the Carter's first time back east, but unfortunately they didn't have time to see the country because on Tuesday they left to return to Idaho.

Sheffield and Ramona had a chance to rest up from their busy summer, with three trips out west, and didn't have another trip planned until late November and early December as they were having Thanksgiving out west before spending three weeks in Hawaii. Commander Rebens had written to say that the Brason would be sailing for her home port at Pearl Harbor in early October. In a further exchange of letters, he extended an invitation for them to visit the Brason while they were in Hawaii. He said that he would see if he could arrange to take them out to sea on a day cruise. Sheffield was excited at the prospect, as it had been a very long time since ha had been to sea.

During the middle of September, Sheffield went in for his annual physical. When he got home, Ramona could tell that it didn't go very well. Afraid to ask, she said, "What did Doctor Hawkins have to say?"

Sheffield, who was usually upbeat, snarled, "He grounded me."

"You're kidding. Why?"

"For a number of reasons. For starters, he said that my reflexes are too slow."

Not wanting to say so, Ramona had known that for some time. "Well we wouldn't want you crash your plane, now would we, Babe?"

Not wanting to admit his recent concerns, he said, "All of the years that I've been flying, I've never had any problems."

"No you haven't. I've never worried about flying with before, but..."

"But what?" Sheffield snapped, before she could express her concern.

"But you are getting older now and your reflexes aren't what they used to be. Why just the other day I saw you bounce pretty good on a landing."

"Oh that was nothing."

"Wasn't it? Listen to me Babe, I think Doctor Hawkins is right. After all, you are eighty two years old, soon to be eighty three. You know that you you can't keep flying forever." Not letting him respond to her last comment, she asked, "What else did he say?"

"My blood pressure was quite high this time."

"You've always been a little high, what was it?"

"One sixty one over ninety three."

"That's not good."

"I guess. I try to watch my diet and I get plenty of exercises. He wants me to have you keep an eye on it for me. He's concerned that it could affect my vision or that I could have a sudden drop in blood pressure. He said that if I were to be in the air when that happened, it could be bad."

"He's right, you know. Did he change your prescription?"

"Yeah he did. He said that if it came down, he might consider lifting the restriction."

"I hate to say it, but I really think that you should face the fact, that your flying days are over, at least at the controls anyway."

"Maybe you're right sweetheart. Maybe you're right." he concluded, resigned to the fact.

Later in September, they got a call from Norma telling them that Samantha had her baby on the 22nd. Their eleventh great grandchild was little girl, who they named Heather. Norma said that both Samantha and Heather were doing fine. About the same time, Todd and Rachel announced that they finally had succeeded and that she was pregnant. Number twelve was due in March. In other news from the family, Wesley had been transferred from Fargo, North Dakota to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He had been the senior companion for the last few months and was now a district leader. As for Marty, he was still in Brasilia but had recently been made senior companion now that he had mastered the language. Takara and Teancum's son Christopher was almost finished with his mission and would be home the week of Thanksgiving.

Not being able to fly had put a crimp in Sheffield's style. It had been his way of preparing for giving patriarchal blessings. Now he had to resort to other means, which he actually found to be just as effective.

Just because he couldn't get behind the controls himself didn't keep him on the ground. It wasn't quite the same, but every once in a while, Craig would take him up in the Stagewing.

Sheffield continued to follow the space program. He had anticipated watching the second launch of the Space Shuttle Columbia on October 9th, but it had to be postponed due to a spill of nitrogen tetroxide while filling the fuel tanks. Then he was all set to watch again on the 4th of November only for it to be scrubbed again due to high oil pressure in orbiter's hydraulic system. It was ironic, high blood pressure kept him from flying and now high oil pressure kept Columbia from flying.

The launch was moved back to seven thirty a.m. the 12th and Sheffield was all set to watch it again. However the day before a faulty data transmitter delayed the launch yet again. To solve the problem, a transmitter was borrowed from the Challenger, which was still under construction in California, and flown overnight to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Once the unit had been installed, the countdown resumed and lift off occurred at ten minutes after ten. Sheffield got to watch it on television and followed the news coverage of the mission. It was to have been a five day mission but had to be cut short when one of three fuel cells failed. Columbia landed at Edwards Air Force Base in California on Saturday after a flight that lasted two days, six hours, thirteen minutes and thirteen seconds. Now he'd have to wait until March to watch Columbia's third trip into space.

In the meanwhile, Sheffield and Ramona were preparing for their next trip, a trip out west for Thanksgiving and their long awaited return to the Islands for the fortieth anniversary reunion of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association and to revisit their mission.

* * * * *

The 600 ship Navy actually called for the Oriskany and the Bon Homme Richard and the four Iowa Class battleships to be recommissioned. The battleships actually were but plans for the carriers were quickly dropped.

For the story of Stirling and Lorraine, see Remembering Geannie Chapter 1