

Chapter LXVIII Between Two Worlds

December 7, 1981 – December 11, 1981

It took a moment for Sheffield to process what was happening. When he realized the full impact of the fact that he had died, he understood that at long last, he had rejoined Geannie. He did not feel sadness over the fact that he was dead, but rather great joy washed over him.

“Oh Geannie!” he cried. “I’ve waited forty long years for this moment. And now its here. You’re here. Now we can be together again.” Then he threw his arms around her to hug her.

Geannie laughed at his attempt to hug her and hold her close. “It doesn’t work quite the same anymore, Curly.”

Frustrated with the attempt, he asked, “Why not? Whats wrong.”

“Whats wrong is that neither of us have a physical body. Things don’t work the same way.”

“Do you mean to tell me that we can’t hug each other?”

“No. Not in the same way anyway. It takes a little getting used to. Just relax and let me show you.”

Geannie put her arms around him but rather than apply any pressure to hold him, she merely encircled him with them.

Curly sighed. “That feels better than any hug I’ve ever had. How are you doing it?”

“Its the energy radiating from my spirit interacting with yours. Now put your arms around me the same way.”

He did as she showed him and the embrace was complete and each was engulfed in each other’s energy. It was a moment of spiritual ecstasy, similar to that of the burning in the bosom that occurs during a spiritual experience. As they were thus embraced, Curly experienced a level of joy that he had never felt during his life.

Then she put her lips to his. The sensation was unlike any kiss he had ever had before. Her lips were warm, but not from the blood that once coursed through her veins. There was a spark that conveyed all of the warmth, energy and emotion of her spirit, unfiltered by flesh that he felt it throughout his entire spirit.

While in the embrace, Curly said, “Happy birthiversary.”

“Why thank you, Curly. But I’m afraid that birthdays and anniversaries don’t have as much meaning in the spirit world as they do in mortality.” She let go and stepped back and asked, “Do I look eighty three years old to you?”

“No, you certainly don’t. You’re more beautiful and lovely than I ever remembered you to be.” he said. “You look so young and vibrant.” he said. Then he lowered his head and asked, “What will you ever see in a old man like me?”

"Don't be silly, Curly." she laughed. "That's what an eighty three year old man looks like." she said gesturing to his lifeless body lying on the bed. "If you could only see yourself. Why you're more dashing and handsome than ever." she said as she ran her fingers through his thick, curly, black hair. "Look deep into my eyes and I will show you what I see."

Sheffield paused for a moment, then gazed into her eyes. As he did, what she was seeing was reflected back at him. He hadn't looked like that in a good long time. His posture was straight and his physique exuded vigor and vitality. There were no wrinkles on his face or age spots on the back of his hands nor any tingling in his left leg. He wore the one piece white jumpsuit with short sleeves that he wore when he left the per-existence to come to live in mortality. He too was barefoot, standing about eighteen inches off the floor.

"Ha ha!" he laughed. "That's how I always felt that I looked. How did you do that?"

"Oh Curly, there is so much for you to learn and I can't wait to teach you." then she added, "As for our anniversary, which is it, our twentieth or our sixtieth?"

"I see your point."

"I have a surprise for you."

"I don't know if I can stand any more surprises just know. I'm still trying to get over the fact that I'm dead."

"Oh Curly, you still make me laugh. You're not dead. Your mortal body is, for now anyway. You are as alive as you have ever been, before or after you were born."

"I guess I already knew that."

"That's right, except now you're in a different state of existence. Like I said, there is so much to learn, but you'll find that you already know a lot of it, you'll just have a better understanding. Now there are some people here who have been waiting to see you." She said as she gestured to one side. Several people emerged through a curtain like veil and moved toward them. His joy was intensified as he recognized Sandy, Austin, his parents, brothers, and others. But there were two among them that he didn't recognize.

"Curly," Geannie said. "This is Charles Emmett, and this is your grandson, Anthony."

Sheffield mingled with his loved ones as each of them greeted him and expressed their joy in being reunited with him.

"They have to leave us now, Curly." Geannie said. "But the reunion will continue once we're finished here. Don't worry, I'll be with every step of the way. When we're finished here, I'll take you through the veil and into the light."

"When will that be?"

"Typically after the funeral." Geannie replied. "Remember that I just said that there is so much to learn."

I'm going to give you one of those lessons right now, Flyboy. You only think you've flown. Take my hand."

Sheffield took a hold of her hand, and in an instant they were whisked back home to Virginia. They looked in on Craig and Edith as they were sitting down to dinner. Next they looked in on both Geoff and Todd and their families. In a flash, they flew back across the country and looked in on Norma and Wade, Teresa and Samantha and their families, and Janet and Jerry and their girls. In another flash, they were hovering over Wesley in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. And finally she took him to Brasilia to see Marty.

After lingering briefly at each place, they were back in the hotel room in Honolulu, beside and slightly above the bed where Sheffield's body lay. "You have truly been blessed these last forty years, Curly. You've got a great family. They'll miss you and mourn your passing, but they will move on with their lives."

"That doesn't mean that I love you and the kids any less."

"I know, Curly. That is the beauty of love. There is more than enough to go around. Although we have been apart these many years, I never stopped loving you either. It has only grown stronger."

"After you and the kids died, I never imagined I'd ever have a family again, especially after Ramona and I were married." Sheffield paused. "Ramona." he said. "This is going to be hard on her."

"Just like it was for you when I died." Geannie said. "But after she mourns your passing, she too will be alright and one day, you'll come and get her as well. I'm so glad that you and her got together. It's been a joy looking after you. I guess you could say that I lived all the great adventures that you had together vicariously through her. She was my best friend and when she married you, she became my sister. One day it will be the three of us."

Just then, they were interrupted as Ramona came into the hotel room. "Sheffield." she called. "I'm back. Babe." she called again as she came into the bedroom. "It's time to get up and get ready." She sat down on the bed next to him and asked. "How's your headache?"

There was no response, so she gently shook Sheffield's shoulder; the Sheffield on the bed. "Sheffield." she said again. There was still no response. This time she shook him more vigorously. "Sheffield! Sheffield!" she called.

"I'm right here." Sheffield answered.

"She can't hear you or see you, Curly."

He watched as Ramona took him by the wrist and put her ear close to his face. "No! No!" she sobbed. "This can't be happening."

That brought the reality of what was taking place came more clearly in to focus for Sheffield.

Ramona picked up the telephone on the nightstand next to the bed and dialed the front desk. "This is Missus Brason in eleven twenty nine. My husband is not breathing and has no pulse." she said desperately.

“Please call for help.”

Disbelief registered in his face as he watched Ramona roll him over on his back and knelt beside him and began administering CPR. With tears streaming down her face, she said, “Come on Babe. Come on.” She stopped pushing on his chest and bent over his face, putting her mouth over his mouth and nose and breathed air into his lungs. She put her ear to his mouth to listen for any sign of breathing and repeated the process. “Breath!” she ordered before giving him another breath. There was still no response, so she resumed pumping his chest.

“This is hard to watch.” Sheffield said. “I don't know if I can bear it.”

“It's alright, Curly. Its alright.” Together they watched as Ramona frantically tried to revive him. After two or three minutes, a pair paramedics came through the door and took over.

After working on him for several minutes, one of them said, “I'm sorry Missus Brason, but your husband is gone.”

Both Sheffield and Geannie were saddened to see Ramona so heartbroken as his words sank in. The paramedics placed his body in a body bag and placed it in the gurney and wheeled it out of the room. Ramona sat on the bed, alone in tears with no one to comfort her.

Sheffield left Geannie's side and moved closer in an attempt to assure her that he was alright. Whether or not she could sense his presence, he wasn't sure. Perhaps the rush of sudden grief had blocked any chance of feeling his attempt to comfort her.

After regaining her composure, somewhat, she picked up the telephone again and this time she called Craig, both as her son and as her bishop.

“Hello.” Craig answered.

After pause, interrupted by sniffing, “Hello Craig.”

“Mom, whats the matter?” Craig asked sensing that something was terribly wrong.

“It's your father, Craig. He just passed away.”

“What?” Craig asked in disbelief. “What happened?”

“I don't know for sure. He said that he had a headache and laid down to take a nap while I went to get my hair done. When I came back, he was dead.”

“Oh no. That's terrible. Do you want me to get on the next flight and come over?”

“No, I need you there to take care of things and get ready for when I bring him home. Oh and I need you to call the girls for me.”

“I can do that. What are you going to do in the meantime?”

“I need to go to the morgue and sign some papers and make the arrangements to bring him home.”

"I hate to see you have to do all of that alone, Mom. Is there anyone there you can call on?"

Ramona thought for a moment. "Yes, there is someone. I'll call Manti Morley."

"That's who I would have suggested."

"Listen Craig. I know it's late back home. I'll let you go now. Do what you need to do and I'll call you back tomorrow. I'm going to call Manti and I need to go to the morgue."

"Thanks for calling Mom. I'm so sad to hear the news. I know that you're a strong woman, you'll be alright."

"It's not like I've never suddenly found myself a widow before. Believe me, it's not easy but I'll be alright."

"I know you will, Mom. I'll talk to you tomorrow."

"Alright. Goodnight Craig."

When she hung up the telephone, Geannie said to Curly, "See. She'll be alright. It'll take time but she'll be alright. Do you remember how she handled things when Tomcat was killed?"

"Yeah. But, we were together so much longer that it's bound to make it harder for her."

"I'm sure it will. But I know Ramona, she's a very strong woman. We'll stay close to her for now and try to comfort her the best we can."

Ramona immediately picked up the telephone again and called Manti up in Laie. It rang several times with no answer. Since she had no luck getting through to Manti, she thought for a moment of who else she might call. Then it came to her. She dialed the hotel operator.

A pleasant female voice answered, "This is the operator. How may I direct your call?"

"Hello, operator. This is Missus Brason in room eleven twenty nine. Could you please put me through to the Navy base and connect me to Commander Winston Reubens, the commanding officer of the USS Brason?"

"Yes ma'am, give me a moment."

Ramona waited, listening to the music on the other end of the line. While she waited, a million things ran through mind in a jumbled mass of confusion as each thought screamed for her attention.

It took a few minutes, but eventually Ramona heard the cheerful voice of Commander Reubens, say "Hello Missus Brason. What can I do for you?"

"I'm sorry to bother you Commander."

"That's quite alright."

"It's just that I don't know who else to turn to."

"Oh, is something the matter, Missus Brason?"

"Yes, there is. Sheffield just died a little while ago and I'd like for you to accompany me to the morgue."

"You're kidding. What happened."

"I don't know. He has been fine. We went to the national memorial this morning and out for lunch. All he said was that he had a headache and wanted to take a nap while I went to the salon. When I got back, he was gone."

"I'm so sorry to hear that. Of course I'll go with you. Where are you staying again?"

"At the Waikiki Sheraton, room eleven twenty nine."

"I'll be there in under thirty minutes."

"Thank you so much Commander."

After hanging up the telephone, Ramona broke down and had a good cry. There was nothing Sheffield and Geannie could do but watch her heart break. After a good twenty minutes, Ramona got up and went into the bathroom and washed her face and touched up her makeup.

As promised in under a half an hour, there was a knock on the door. She opened it to see the young, dashing Commander Ruebens in his service whites. In a way he reminded her of Sheffield when he was the young dashing officer who she was in love with, even though he was married to her best friend.

"Please come in Commander, while I grab my purse."

Before she could turn around to get it. He put his arms around her and held her for a moment.

"Thanks, Commander. I needed that."

"Please, Missus Brason, call me Winston. You remind me so much of my own mother."

"Alright, Winston. And you remind me of my son." Ramona said, with her purse in her hand. "Shall we go."

Curly and Geannie followed along behind them. "This will be important for you to be there, Curly." she said.

At the morgue, Ramona identified herself and was told to have a seat and that the coroner would be with her in just a moment. After being seated, Ramona reached for Winston's hand and held on tight. Neither of them said anything while they waited.

After a few minutes a middle aged man of mixed Hawaiian and oriental background, wearing a white lab coat came out and introduced himself as Dr. Ralph Kamauli and invited them into his office. Once they were seated he said, "First off, Missus Brason, let me say how sorry I am for your loss."

"Thank you. It was so unexpected. He was fine one moment and then he was gone."

"That's what the paramedics who brought him in said. Normally we would have to do an autopsy to determine the cause of death. But first I had a full set of x rays done to see if anything showed up. I can tell you that your husband died of a brain aneurysm."

"I understand." Ramona said. "I was a nurse. May I see the x ray."

"Certainly, if you wish."

He got up from his desk and mounted the the x ray on the viewer for her. The dark mass in his head showed clearly what had happened.

"It probably came on so sudden, that there wouldn't have been anything anyone could have done about it."

"He had complained of a headache so he laid down to take a nap."

"He most likely died instantly in his sleep, never knowing what hit him. Is there anything else you can tell me about his medical history that may help?"

"Yes. As a matter of fact there is. At his last physical in September, his blood pressure was unusually high. With a change in his medication it seemed to help. I took his blood pressure once a week just to keep track of it."

"I assume that you are here on vacation. Do you know if he was taking his medication. Sometimes when people are on vacation, its easy to forget."

"I think he has, but I don't know for sure."

"Tell me Missus Brason, what brought you to Hawaii?"

"We are her for the Pearl Harbor Survivors reunion."

"Oh I see. So he was at Pearl Harbor."

"We both were"

"Really? Well as you can imagine there is some paperwork that I need to have you fill out so that I can make up a death certificate. Once I have that, I can release his body to you so you can take him home for burial. I can help with those arrangements. My receptionist has all of the forms you need. If you would step out into the waiting area, she will have them for you. There is an office with a desk that you can use and have your privacy. When you have completed the forms leave them with her. I can probably have everything ready by tomorrow morning."

Ramona took the forms into the office and sat down to fill them out. She knew the information requested by heart as she filled in the blanks. His drivers license was enough proof of his identity.

When she turned the forms back in to the receptionist, she looked it over and said. "Everything looks in order Missus Brason. We'll make the arrangements to have your husband's remains taken to Roanoke as soon as possible, hopefully tomorrow afternoon. Is this the number we can reach you at?"

"Yes. Thank you. I'm staying at the Waikiki Sheraton, room eleven twenty seven. I'll be waiting to hear from you."

"We should have things ready in the morning."

When Ramona and Commander Reubens left the coroner's office it was just before five o'clock. "I hate to see you all alone, Missus Brason. Would you like to come home with me and spend the evening. I'm sure my wife won't mind."

"Yes I'd like that very much." Ramona said. Then she added, "You know, I've never met your wife."

Knowing that Ramona was in good hands Curly and Geannie remained with the body a while longer. He had so many questions about what he could expect and Geannie did her best to answer them and explain things to him.

Meanwhile, Winston and his wife, Carmen and their two children, Carl age fourteen and Joan age ten, were happy to have Ramona in their home for dinner and to spend the evening. At one point in the conversation after dinner, the topic turned to the funeral. Commander Reubens offered, "I'd like to help in any way I can. Here's what I'd like to do. I won't be able to go, but I'd like to send a detail of men with you when you return home to serve as pall bears and as a military honor guard."

"Thank you Winston. I think that would be a fitting tribute. I'd like that very much."

"And," the Commander continued, "I'd like to donate the ship's flag that was flown on her commissioning day for Admiral Brason's casket."

Later in the evening, he took her back to the hotel for the night. She got ready and went to bed, but sleep didn't come easily. While she tossed and turned, Curly and Geannie lingered in the outer room where they talked all night, reminiscing on their lives together in mortality. Towards sunrise, while Ramona was still asleep, they went out onto the beach to watch the sunrise, listen to surf, and talk. There was so much to talk about and so many feelings to express now that they were together again.

A little after seven, just after sunrise, Ramona was awakened by the ringing of the telephone. Groggily answered to find that it was Craig calling. First and foremost, he wanted to know how she was holding up. She told him all that she knew, what had she had done so far, and what to expect. Craig had called the girls and others to let them know what had happened. Their conversation was brief, and she concluded by telling him that she would call as soon as she had more information.

Now that Ramona was awake, Curly and Geannie stayed close by so they could learn what was going on and to just be nearby and hopefully extend some comfort. After talking to Craig, Ramona decided to get up and get ready for what had the potential of being a long, busy day.

While getting ready for the day, she was interrupted several times by the telephone. The first call was Norma quickly followed by one from Janet. Both were in shock at their father's sudden death. She told them both pretty much the same thing as she explained what happened and what she knew. Like Craig, they both

offered to come over and be with her. She told them that it was possible that she would be leaving before they could get there and that they should fly home instead. The next to call was from Manti. He had got the news from Takara. He too offered his profound condolences and asked if she needed him to come down and assist her in any way he could. Again she retold the same story that she had already told three times that morning.

After talking to Manti, she went down stairs to get a little bite to eat. She didn't really have much of an appetite, but knowing that she needed to eat something, she settled on a fruit platter. While at breakfast, she was approached by the President of the National Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, who was a fellow Virginian. The word had got out that Sheffield had died and he told her that at the banquet the night before that his passing had been noted. He too asked if there was anything he could do.

She returned to her room just before eight, in anticipation of a call from the coroner's office. When the phone rang, she answered thinking that it was them. Instead it was President Tanner, the mission president. The news had made it into the local media that one of the Pearl Harbor Survivors reunion attendees had passed away the day before. President Tanner told her that there was a small article about Sheffield in the Honolulu Advertiser that accompanied the front page article covering the reunion festivities the day before.

Finally, she got the call that she had been waiting for. The death certificate had been prepared and the body was ready to transport home on a flight leaving at eleven seventeen. They asked that Ramona come down to the morgue and sign the release so they could turn the body over to her.

Ramona's next call was to Commander Reubens. He told her that the ship's detail was ready and that he would meet her at the hotel and take her back downtown. With time running short, she called Craig at work and gave him the itinerary and asked him to let the others know. Lastly she called Manti. When Commander Reubens knocked on the door, Ramona had hers and Sheffield's bags packed and ready to go. Winston called for a bellhop to take her bags down to his car and accompanied her down to the lobby to check out. Things were happening fast now as Curly and Geannie tagged along behind.

When they arrived at the morgue, they were met by a detail of fourteen uniformed sailors and one officer from the Brason who would be accompanying her. Six were assigned to serve as pall bearers, eight as the military honor guard, and a bugler, all under the command of Ensign C. Taylor Jamison the ship's counselor and chaplain, assisted by Senior Chief Gunners Mate Wallace P. Rivers.

Ramona reviewed the documents and finding everything in order, she signed for the body. Once she had possession of his remains, the honor guard draped the five foot by nine and half foot American flag over the specialized shipping container. Lead by Commander Ruebens and Ramona, the pall bears, with military precision, carried the casket to the waiting hearse.

Commander Reubens, Ramona, Ensign Jamison and Chief Rivers followed the hearse to the Honolulu International Airport, followed by the sailors in a Navy truck checked out from the base motor pool. On the way to the airport, Ramona hardly had a word to say. The men accompanying her left her to her thoughts.

When they arrived at the airport, Manti and Lolani were waiting for them so they could see her off. There was a brief military ceremony at the airport that consisted of the playing of Taps and a three volley salute as the pall bearers carried the casket to the cargo hold of the American Airlines 747. The ceremony was more of a dress rehearsal for the men from the Brason than anything else.

With the casket in place, the men were dismissed to board the flight. Commander Reubens and Ensign Jamison remained behind while Ramona visited with their old friends before she boarded the plane.

"Missus Brason," Commander Reubens said, "This is where I must leave you. You'll be in good hands with Ensign Jamison. But if there is anything you need, anything at all, be sure to call me."

"Thanks for everything Winston." Ramona said as she threw her arms around him. Sobbing she said, "I don't know what I would have done without you."

"It's been my pleasure. God bless you and I hope that one day we shall meet again."

Ramona and Ensign Jamison boarded the plane and took their seats, his right next to hers, and waited for take off. Once the plane was in the air, Ramona settled in for the long flight home. She found Ensign Jamison to be a good traveling companion, more than that, he was a good listener as she opened up to the young twenty eight year old naval officer, who was young enough to be her grandson, as he was the same age as Gean.

Curly and Geannie waited around until the plane left. Confident that once again Ramona was in good hands, they went on ahead. Sheffield couldn't quite get used to the mode of transportation, for almost instantly, they were at the Two Star Ranch. "You don't get to enjoy the view this way." he complained.

"That something else you'll learn to do." Geannie said. "You'd be surprised at what you can take in. You'll see things you'd never see from a plane."

While waiting, Sheffield showed Geannie around the ranch, then they revisited some of her favorite places in and around Roanoke, including the cabin and the lake where she had spent so much time. It was she, who was instrumental in getting it back into the family. In the twenty four hours since they had been reunited, they had talked non stop, about anything and everything. They talked about their forty three years together in mortality; the twenty three years before they were married and the twenty years that they were married. Geannie talked about her forty years that she had spent in the spirit world and Curly talked about his forty years since she had died. They talked about the people, places and events in their lives. They talked about what lay ahead. There was so much more that they hadn't yet got around to talking about.

Late that afternoon, while Ramona was still on her way home, Norma and Janet landed in Roanoke. Craig meet them and took them to their parents' house. Even though no one was there, they went on in and got settled. After putting their things away, they went back over to Craig's house for supper and begin taking about about ideas for the funeral.

It was quite late that evening when Ramona arrived home. Craig, Norma and Janet, and Geoff and Todd and their families went back to the airport and met her when her flight landed. Arrangements had been made to take Sheffield's body to the funeral home. Even at that late hour, the casket was ceremoniously unloaded from the plane by the pall bears and honor guard and placed in the hearse and taken directly to the mortuary.

As for the detail from the Brason, they took the fifteen passenger van that Craig had lined up for them into Roanoke to the YMCA at 425 Church Avenue, where Craig had arranged for them to stay. In addition to a four-lane indoor swimming pool, gymnasium, and men's health club, the top two floors of the four story building built in 1958 had dormitory-style rooms that housed up to sixty men.

Naturally, Ramona was emotionally and physically exhausted after the long trip home, coupled with Sheffield's death, so the homecoming was brief. Once she got home, she pretty much went straight to bed. The details could wait until the next day. As for Curly and Geannie, they lingered nearby to shed what comfort they could over the situation. For Sheffield, it was difficult to see the sadness and grief that gripped his family, especially Ramona. He remembered and knew all too well what they were going through, but now he had a different perspective. Although their presence was undetected, it did help. Geannie explained that that was part of reason why the recently departed were permitted to linger between both worlds. All the while they had a lot more to talk about.

Wednesday was a day of planning for the funeral. Ramona had a more restful night, partly due to being back in her own home. All plans for the rest of their vacation and touring the mission were forgotten as plans came together for the service. During the morning, Ramona, Craig (also participating as the bishop), Norma, Janet, and Ensign Jamison met with the funeral director.

Ensign Jamison was there since he and his men were to play an integral role in the service. In college he had majored in psychology, and had a masters degree in counseling and had minored if theology. Upon completion of his masters degree, he enlisted in the Navy Reserve. After completing officer training, he was commissioned as an Ensign. He still had four and half years of his six year enlistment left.

When everything was worked out, the funeral was scheduled for eleven o'clock on Saturday morning, December 12, 1981. That gave everyone three days, the rest of Wednesday, all day Thursday and Friday, and Saturday morning to get ready. The first thing was to get the word out. Craig, Norma, and Janet each

called their own families. Ensign Jamison offered to call their out of town friends. Grateful for the help, Ramona provided a list of names and telephone numbers. A brief death announcement had been printed in that morning's edition of the Roanoke Times. A more comprehensive obituary would appear in the Thursday edition.

As the oldest and as bishop, Craig was responsible for coordinating everything and pulling the whole thing together. He would officiate at the service and be the concluding speaker. Norma was responsible for the music. She planned for an opening and closing hymn by the congregation, a choir composing of the grandchildren would sing "If You Could Hie to Kolob", Sheffield's favorite hymn, and at Ramona's request Edith's sister and Sheffield's niece, Misti Casper, would sing "Harbor Lights". Janet's assignment was to compose the obituary and deliver the life sketch. The other speakers would be Wade and Ensign Jamison. Jerry was tapped to dedicate the grave. Geoff and Todd would give the invocation and benediction respectively. The family prayer prior to the funeral would be offered by Gean's husband, Nathan. And finally, the Salem Ward Relief Society would provide a luncheon after funeral.

With things in motion, the rest of the family began making their travel arrangements. Some would be arriving on Thursday and the rest on Friday. Those who had a part in the service began working on their remarks and rehearsing the music, regardless of where they were.

The Brason detail practiced and rehearsed to perfect their ability to fulfill their assignment. Chief Rivers had the pall bears, under Boatswains Mate Second Class Patrick Barbarossa, practicing with a display casket borrowed from the mortuary. It was filled with weight to simulate the actual casket that they would be carrying. In addition, they practiced folding the flag over and over again so everything thing would go off with exactness and precision. The honor guard, directly under Chief Rivers practiced marching and fired volley after volley until they got their timing in perfect harmony. And last of all Musician Third Class Manuel Rodriguez practiced playing taps until every note was flawless.

Meanwhile, Edith, Brenda and Rachel took it upon themselves to decorate the house for Christmas. When Sheffield and Ramona left on their trip before Thanksgiving, they hadn't done any decorating since they wouldn't be there to enjoy it. Edith and her daughters-in-law put up a tree and got out all of Ramona's Christmas decorations and went to work. They even put up the outdoor lights. Having the decorations up helped to ease the sadness that befell the family. Edith had made the comment, "The celebration of Christ's birth should fill us all with the hope that His life was all about, the promise or immortality and eternal life and being an eternal family."

On Thursday afternoon, Gean and Nathan and their kids arrived along with Tina and Mark. The rest flew in on Friday. Wade couldn't come any sooner because he had classes and ended up taking Friday and

Monday off as it was. He and Teresa and Samantha and their families all flew to Salt Lake where they met up with Jerry, Andrea, and Pearl. They too ended up missing a couple of days of school. Also arriving on the same flight were Takara and Teancum and their family. Ramona and Craig both had a house full with just family. Other friends from out of town, who also arrived on Friday, were staying at various hotels around the area. Ramona wasn't sure just who would be coming for sure.

Curly had been so wrapped up in being reunited with Geannie, that he realized that he was neglecting Ramona. It was just that there was so much to talk about after forty years. He could see that she was holding up, on the outside at least. But he knew how she must have been feeling on the inside. He too once was in the same situation. Just his presence seemed to help. After all there wasn't much more he could do.

At times while the family was coming and going, she had moments to herself. During one of those times, he moved close to her in an attempt to comfort her. Ramona was in a contemplative attitude and it seemed like the best opportunity that he might have to get through to her.

"I'm sorry that I left you so suddenly, Sweetheart." he began. "We didn't even have a chance to say goodbye. Believe me, I was as surprised as you were. I had no idea that this was going to happen. I was looking forward to attending the banquet that evening and spend the next two weeks revisiting all of the places and people we loved so much. We should still be there.

"Believe me, I know what you're going through right now, because I've been there. You were there to help me through it. I don't know if I would have made it with out you. I know that I was a little slow in realizing that you loved me, but by the time I began to figure it out, I found myself falling in love with you. It was an easy transition after all of the years that we had been friends.

"The thirty six, almost thirty seven years since we were married have been wonderful. I'm glad that you got to be a mother. You're as good as they come. The kids all turned out the way they did because of you. Back then, I had no idea that I would have the opportunity to be a father again. It was almost as if I picked up where I left off with Sandy and Austin.

"I can hardly believe all of the good and wonderful things that have come our way over the years. I must say, my life has been good, and it is all because of you and your love for me. We made quite a team, didn't we? I know that you'll get along just fine without me. You've got the kids and grandkids to fill your life. I just wish they weren't scattered across the country. You'll have to go spend time out west as much as you want.

"I'll look in on you from time to time. But Geannie tells me there is much for me to learn and do where I'll be. When the time comes, I'll come for you and you can join us. But I have a feeling that will be a good long while. Just remember that I love you and being separated from you won't diminish it, but will only grow

stronger. Remember that after however long it may be, we will be reunited and our marriage bond doesn't end at death. Like the song says, 'Families can be together forever', I'm sure of it. I don't know what more to say. I'm not even sure that you're able to hear me, but I had to tell you how I feel and how much I do love you."

When he was finished, Sheffield touched his cheek with his hand. Ramona shuttered as a spark of energy ran down her spine. She touched her face where his hand was and simply said, "Oh Sheffield. How I love you."

The moment was interrupted when Norma came into the room and said, "We need to be leaving for the viewing soon."

By Friday evening, Sheffield's body had been prepared for the viewing and all of the funeral arrangements were in place. The family gathered at the mortuary for a private viewing at six thirty. It was a somber moment as the family saw him for the first time. He looked perfectly healthy laying in his casket dressed in his temple robes. It was still hard to believe that he was gone. Curly and Geannie were there as well. More than one member of the family commented that they felt that he was close by.

At seven, friends, neighbors, and ward members began arriving. Ramona and the kids had formed a reception line to greet those who came to pay their respects. Ramona stood at the head of the casket, followed by Craig and Edith, Norma and Wade, and Janet and Jerry, while the grandkids and great grandkids were scattered about the room.

The room was arrayed with flowers that had been sent by various people or groups. There were several large sprays; one from Ramona and the family, one from the Salem Ward, one from the crew of the USS Brason, another from the Reprisal Reunion Association, and another from the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association. There were bouquets, baskets, and potted plants and a beautiful lei from the Hawaiian saints and the Honolulu Hawaii Mission.

Of the first to arrive were many of the Brasons and Austins among others. At one point, the detail from the Brason filed past. Ramona was surprised to see Commander Reubens and his wife. When Ensign Jamison informed him of time of the funeral, he and his wife made arrangements to be there and had flown in from Hawaii.

The Reubens weren't the only ones who had come all the way from Hawaii. As a group, Manti and Iolani Morley, Richard and Connie Kaaola, Max and Aloha Mahaulu, and Frank and Olina Alapai had made the trip in order to be there. Other out of town friends who came included, Morris and Sheila Gover, Wayne and Gail Gover, Debra and Chet Mayfield, Hank and Teri Terry, Mace and Pat Owen, Paula and Jacob Messner, Dan and Daphne Kirk, and Joseph and Rhonda Morrison who brought Marcella up from Texas.

All evening there was a steady line of people coming through. The family found it comforting that so many wanted to pay their respects to Sheffield. Many commented on the influence that he had been in their lives, especially some of the wrestlers that he had coached over the years. Sheffield, himself, was gratified that so many people would come out to see him on a windy, cold December night. Hearing what they had to say made him feel that he had been a force for good in his sphere of influence.

The viewing lasted longer than was intended. It was scheduled until nine, but at nine thirty there was still several people there. Finally around ten the family was able to go home. It had been a long, emotionally draining evening, especially for Ramona. Tomorrow promised to be even more so.

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