

Chapter LXIX

Remembering Sheffield

December 12, 1981

That night, Ramona had a full house, yet the place in the bed where Sheffield slept next to her was empty, although he wasn't far away. On Saturday morning, Ramona was up before it began getting light. The house was quiet as all of her guests were still asleep. She wandered out to the kitchen for a drink of water and to look at the thermometer. It was only seventeen degrees outside. The forecast for the day called for a high of thirty seven with partly cloudy skies. She decided to go ahead and start getting ready for the day.

She was showered and dressed by the time it began getting light around seven. The only one who was up was Wade, who was working on his remarks. It wasn't long before everyone else began getting up. Typically, Ramona would have had things set out for breakfast. Not this morning, it was everyone for themselves with whatever they could find. Fortunately either Norma or Janet had gone to the store the day before. Otherwise there wouldn't have been much in the house. Since they were planning on being gone for a month, Sheffield and Ramona used up much of what they had on hand before they left. Ramona was glad that she got ready when she did, because after finding something to eat, everyone was scrambling to get ready at the same time. It was pretty much the same scene at Craig's house.

Norma and the choir of grandchildren and their spouses were practicing their musical number in the family room accompanied by Takara on Geannie's old piano. It was the first real opportunity that they had to practice it together, but fortunately it was a hymn that they were all familiar with, since it was their grandfather's favorite. Wade was putting the finishing touches on his talk and Janet reviewed her remarks.

About eight thirty, Craig stopped by and picked up Ramona and together they drove to the Stake Center. They went into the Bishop's office and went over the program and all that would be taking place. The flowers had all been brought from the funeral home and had been set up in the chapel and the Relief Society room where the viewing was to take place.

The rest of the family began arriving around nine o'clock to be there for the arrival of the casket. The hearse arrived a few minutes later accompanied by Commander and Mrs. Reubens and the men from the Brason. Commander and Mrs. Reubens joined Ramona while the sailors, dressed in their dress blues, with white dickies, white leggings, and white gloves, assembled at the rear of the hearse and unloaded the flag draped casket and placed it on the dolly.

With military precision the six pall bears, led by Ensign Jamison and followed by Chief Rivers and the eight men of the honor guard in single file, took the casket up to the double doors, into the meetinghouse, and down the hall to the Relief Society Room. Once the casket was in place and the flag was removed, the

men took their seats in the rear of the room. The funeral director and his assistant then opened the lid of the casket. Ramona and the kids assumed the same positions that they had occupied the previous evening and for the next hour greeted those who came to pay their respects.

When the last person filed through, everyone except for the family, their closest friends, and the Brason detail were asked to go take their seats in the chapel. The immediate family gathered around to say their last goodbyes. It was a touching moment indeed. It was for Sheffield as well because he would be leaving them behind for good in short while. He cried for those who cried for him. Then Nathan offered a beautiful, heart felt family prayer. The family held tight to one another and shed more tears as the casket was closed for the last time.

The flag was once again spread over the casket and a spray of flowers was laid on top. In the same manner as they brought the casket into the building, it was rolled to the chapel. Ramona asked Commander Reubens to accompany her as she and the family followed the casket.

Once the casket was in place below the podium, the men of the detail occupied the first two rows on the right side of the chapel. As Ramona and the family entered, they were amazed to see both the chapel and the cultural hall filled to capacity. Ramona and Commander Reubens sat in the center of the front row, surrounded by her family. She had asked Winston to sit with her since Craig went to sit on the stand, along with Wade and Janet.

Meanwhile, Curly and Geannie likewise took their seats in the center of the front row of an unseen balcony above the chapel. They were joined by Sandy, Austin, and Charles Emmett, and a host of family from generations past who came to celebrate Sheffield's life in mortality. Although undetected by mortal eyes, many who were there sensed their presence.

When all of the family was seated, Craig's first counselor invited the congregation to be seated. At that time, Craig, as the Bishop, stepped to the pulpit to conduct the service. He had conducted a few services since being called as the bishop, but this one was the by far the most difficult since it was so personal. He greeted everyone and thanked them for coming on behalf of the family. He recognized the presence of the men from ship that bore Sheffield's name, who where there to perform the military rites. He also recognized President Rupert Casper who was presiding.

The service went as planned with an opening hymn by the congregation and the invocation, which was offered by Geoff. After which Craig announced the proceedings of service. First was Janet with her life sketch.

"My father, Sheffield Brason," she began, "was born on December seventh, eighteen ninety eight in Roanoke, Virginia to Emmett and Ellen Sheffield Brason. He was the youngest of three boys who grew up in

a religious home, his father being a Methodist minister. Any telling of the life of Sheffield Brason would be incomplete without the mention of the love of his life, Gean Marie Austin, who was born the same day and grew up next door.”

“The one thing that Sheffield loved almost as much as Geannie was flying. It was during a time when flying was very new thing and he wanted one day learn to fly. To accomplish his goal, Dad reasoned that best the place to fly was in the military, the Navy to be specific. Following the example of his grandfather and uncle, he applied to and was accepted into the United States Naval Academy, where he attended after graduating from high school.

“After four years, he was awarded his commission and received his first duty assignment. Because of the Naval Academy's restriction on marriage, it wasn't until December seventh, nineteen twenty one that he and Geannie were married, on their twenty third birthdays, I might add.

“Two years after receiving his commission Dad was accepted in to flight training and at long last achieved his life long dream. Once he earned his wings, he and Geannie moved to San Diego where they spent the next several years and began their family, which consisted of Sandra Gean, Austin Sheffield, and Charles Emmett. Charles Emmett passed away on the day that he was born.

“During Dad's prewar career, he filled various assignments in San Diego, Washington, D.C., Pensacola, Florida, Norfolk Virginia and eventually Hawaii as he rose through the ranks. Everywhere he went, his family was right there with him. On December seventh, nineteen forty one, Dad was returning to Hawaii after his ship had completed a top secret mission. As he flew in that morning to celebrate their twentieth anniversary and forty third birthdays, the plane that he was riding in was caught up in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

“After fighting off two enemy planes, he was forced to bail out of the crippled plane before it crashed. After parachuting the ground he commandeered a jeep and made his way to Pearl Harbor, but not before stopping by to check on his family. Finding them not at home, he presumed that they were at church and continued on to the base to see what he could do.

“Thats when he saw their car off to the side of the road. Fearing the worst, he made his way to the base hospital where he found our mother, Ramona, who at the time was a close family friend. She took him to Geannie and he got to say goodbye just before she passed away from the fatal wounds that she had received. Both Sandy and Austin had already died from their wounds.

“Not knowing what else to do, Dad reported for duty while the attack still raged. Once it was over he was able to take care of his family and bring them home to be buried. Dealing with his loss, Dad had to cope with his grief while fighting a war. For the first few months of the war, he was involved in several actions

throughout the Pacific. When in port, my mother did the best she could to help him in his grief.

“Then after returning from another secret mission, he had orders to report to Norfolk and take command of his own ship, the USS Reprisal. Any one who knows Dad knows how much he loved that ship. For the next year and three months he took her into battle from the Bay of Biscay, to the South Atlantic, to above the Arctic Circle, and the Mediterranean. During that time Mom was sent to Washington D.C. with her assignment and they were reunited when he returned from one such battle. During all that time they had stayed in contact with each other.

“That was when Mom convinced him to fall in love with her. It wasn't until after he was wounded in battle and returned to the United States and she nursed him back to health that he finally caught on. They were married here in Roanoke on January twenty second, nineteen forty four. After a tour of duty in Washington, D.C. Dad was promoted to Rear Admiral and went back to war, this time in the Pacific and was present at the surrender.

“In June nineteen forty six, both Mom and Dad retired from the Navy and settled in Roanoke where Dad began his second career as a high school wrestling coach. It was during this time that my brother, sister and I came to be part of their family. Mom, who was very close friends with or mother, had been asked to look after her since she was dying from cancer. Then after our farther was killed in a car accident, our mother arranged for us to be adopted by the Brasons after she was gone. I'm ever so grateful that Sheffield and Ramona became our Mom and Dad. I speak for Craig and Norma as well when I say that it was the best thing that ever happened to us.

“It wasn't long after that, that as a family we were introduced to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through a miraculous chain of events that involved Dad's late wife, Geannie, and my future brother in law, Morris Gover. On November first, nineteen forty seven we were baptized into the church, except for me because I had a broken leg and had to wait. That began a whole new phase of your lives which has greatly blessed us. A year and half later we were sealed together as a family for time and eternity in the Salt Lake Temple.

“Dad loved to attend the temple. At first they didn't have much of an opportunity because there wasn't one close. Then when Craig and Edith and later I attended Ricks College in Idaho, they made sure they attended the Idaho Falls Temple when ever they went out west. Then when I married Jerry and settled in Utah, and when later Norma and Wade moved to Rexburg, Idaho every time they came to see us, they made sure they attended the temple either in Logan or Idaho Falls. Usually both. Dad made sure that all of the temple work for his ancestors was taken care of.

“Dad's naval career wasn't quite over. In nineteen fifty one he was recalled to duty during the Korean

Conflict and once again went off to war. I'll never forget one Christmas when Mom, Norma, and I got to go spend Christmas with him in Tokyo. He served for two more years before returning for good and came home to us and his coaching career.

“When I was senior in high school, we had one more addition to our cobbled together family. I was excited when Mom and Dad told me that we would be hosting a foreign exchange student from Japan and an eighteen year old war orphan came to live with us. Ever since then Takara, whom I consider to be my sister, has been an integral part of our family.

“He loved coaching. He always said that his job wasn't to make wrestlers, but men, out of boys. Over the next several years, Dad had plenty of opportunities to serve in the Church as well. He had been a counselor in the branch presidency and when the Salem branch was created, he was called to be the branch president. He was always doing things for others and blessed a lot of people through his service. He and Mom were great examples of member missionaries, always ready and willing to share the gospel with others. I dare say that a good share of you who are here today were influenced by their missionary efforts. No wonder he was called to serve as a councilor in what was then the Central Atlantic States Mission.

“Perhaps the best time of his life that he looked back on with probably the most fondness was the three years that they presided over the Hawaii Mission. I don't know which he talked about the most, their mission or the Reprisal. He and Mom had just retired and were looking forward to all of the benefits that it afforded, but Dad was always ready and willing to answer the call to duty when the call came. All three of us were married by then and once each year we got to go spend Christmas with them. It was during those visits that I came to understand why he and Mom loved the islands so much.

“Finally when they returned they got to retire, which gave them the opportunity to travel. Much of their travel involved coming to see me since I married a Utah boy and lived out west. Then later Norma and Wade moved to Idaho. Dad never lost his love for flying and had his own plane, in which they made countless cross country trips in. Their travel also took them to Texas to see Uncle Harvey on several occasions and they made three trips back to the Islands.

“For the last eleven years Dad was the patriarch of the Roanoke Stake and gave hundreds of patriarchal blessings. He had the privileged of giving blessings to all of his grandchildren, except for Pearl, who hasn't received hers yet.

“While in Hawaii Dad passed away suddenly from a brain aneurysm on December seventh, nineteen eighty one. Coincidentally that was his eighty third birthday. Even more ironic, it was forty years to the day since Geannie was taken from him. To add to the irony, they both died in Hawaii.

“Of all the titles that Dad held during his life, Captain, Admiral, Coach, President, Patriarch, the one that

he considered to be his greatest achievement was that of husband, father and grandfather. When his first family was taken from him, he never thought he'd have another, that was until Craig, Norma, and I came along. As of today He and Mom have fourteen grandchildren, including Takara's three and my Anthony who only lived a few hours. All of them are here today, except for my son Wesley, and Norma's son Marty who are serving missions. Most of the grandchildren are now married with families of their own. In addition there are now eleven great grandchildren with two more on the way. Dad leaves behind a goodly posterity. We are what we are because of he and Mom. We will miss you Dad, but we know that one day, we will all be together again. Save a place for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”

Next Armistice Casper came forward to present her musical tribute as requested by Ramona. Some may have thought the song that she sang was a bit odd for a funeral. But as they listened to the words, it was fitting indeed.

“I saw the harbor lights They only told me we were parting
Those same old harbor lights That once brought you to me.

“I watched the harbor lights How could I help it? Tears were starting. Good-bye to golden nights
Beside the silvery seas.

“I long to hold you dear, And kiss you just once more. But you were on the ship, And I was on the shore.

“Now I know lonely nights For all the while my heart keeps praying That someday harbor lights Will bring you back to me.”

The next to speak was Wade. He began by commenting on Misti's song. “How appropriate. Of all the times that Ramona saw Sheffield off to sea, with him on the ship and she on the shore, she surely experienced many lonely nights. Now that he has sailed once more, there will be many lonely nights ahead. But at last, one day they will be together again.

“I first meet Sheffield when I was a junior in high school when I tried out for the varsity wrestling team. He was referred to as the Admiral and I thought for sure I was getting myself into an ordeal akin to the rigors of military life. I couldn't have been more wrong. I found him to be a genuine and caring man who inspired me to do my very best. I don't so much remember the training and discipline that he put me through in preparing for a match as I do the things that he prepared me for in life.

“I'll never forget the day that he and his family showed up for Church in the Roanoke Branch all those years ago. He already displayed the characteristics of a member of the church, having been truly taught by goodly parents. It was only a matter of time before they were baptized. After graduating from high school and going away to Ricks College, I served a mission to Japan. That was during the Korean War and you can

imagine my surprise when a two star admiral came to the serviceman's branch that I was working with. It was none other than my old wrestling coach. I observed him during the times that his ship was in port as he brought men to our meetings. Two of those men, Dan Kirk and Phil Moncur are here today. Both they and their families have long enjoyed the blessings of the gospel because of him.

“Janet has already mentioned the time that they went to Japan at Christmas time. I too remember that as they attended our branch. I remember how Norma had become a lovely young woman, but being a missionary at the time, that's all the farther it went. When I got home from my mission, she was doing everything possible to get the attention my younger brother, Read. For some reason, he just didn't get it. His loss was my gain for she turned her attention towards me, and I got it! And because I got it, I have been blessed to be member of the Brason Family for the last twenty six years.

“From that vantage point, I came to learn what made this man who he was. It was genuine love. Love for his family, love for his country and for his fellowman. I can't think of any greater act of love than to take in three orphans, make that four counting Takara, to create a family. People were naturally attracted to him and responded to his example and encouragement. Again Janet mentioned in her remarks that many here today were influenced by his missionary efforts. Can we see by the show of hands how many of you are members of the Church today, because of him?”

Wade paused as a sea of hands went up.

“Keep your hands up. Just look around at all the hands in the air. Look at the results of the efforts of this one man. And think of the countless others who aren't here today. Now anyone who has been influenced at all in one way or another, will you also raise your hands.”

Again he paused as nearly everyone else raised their hand. “It would be easier,” he continued, “to ask for a show of hands for those who he has not influenced. Thank you you may put your hands down now.

“The number of stories as to how he has influenced the lives of people are as varying as the people themselves. He just had a knack for perceiving the needs of others and then acting on them. It didn't matter what their background or beliefs were. Not everyone he shared the gospel with accepted it, but that didn't mean he ever stopped being their friend and loving and caring for them.

“There were many quite acts of service, love, and compassion that went unseen, except by the recipients. He was never the kind to do good to be seen of men, although many of his acts of kindness were. It didn't matter if he was acting in the offices which he held or not, he went about doing good at every opportunity. He was a humble man who sought not for his own aggrandizement. Many times I have seen him draw the attention away from himself to let the light shine on others. Because of that he was given the opportunities to serve and bless the lives of others. Many of us know of his legacy as the first president of

the Salem Branch.

“On those Christmas vacations to see Sheffield and Ramona in Hawaii, I saw first hand the influence he had on their missionaries. It was much like that which he had on his wrestlers, or even the men under his command in the Navy. Not only that, but the Saints in the islands, a few of whom are here today. But I firmly believe that his influence went far beyond that.

“Sheffield took to heart the scripture that says, 'In as much as ye have done it unto the least of these.' He has mourned with those who mourned and comforted those who stood in need of comfort. Indeed this man that we honor today has truly stood as a witness for Christ at all times and in all places; whether it was in the military, a gymnasium, a classroom, the church, in public or private, or in his home.

“He was an example to me, as was my own father, of the kind of man I wanted to become and try to be. I'm not perfect and neither was he, but his heart was in the right place. Sometimes I'm not so sure about mine. It is evident today that the world is a better place and people are better than they were because of his presence here upon this earth for the last eighty three years and will be until the end of time as long as those he influenced follow the example that he set and the example of He who influenced him.

“Certainly of all of the good men who have walked this earth, his name is recorded in the Book of Life as one of them. When I think of Sheffield, I liken him to Job of old. He wasn't afflicted to the same degree as Job, but he was tested, tried, and forged by the fires of life. Like Job, he had his first family taken from him. And like Job he had another family given to him. To his family, one day we will be with him again and be apart of the eternal family that started here on earth, both of his families as one, for that is how he saw them.

“I am proud and grateful at the same time to have known Sheffield Brason. I will miss him, as we all will. May we ever keep his example before us and work within us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen”

The next to speak was Ensign Taylor Jamison. “On behalf of Commander Winston Reubens, the crew of the USS Brason, and the United States Navy, it is my privilege to pay tribute to Vice Admiral Sheffield Brason. It has been my opportunity to be in the presence of this great man on two occasions, the most recent was one week ago today, just before his untimely demise. On both occasions I sensed the greatness of this man.

“I had read both of his books and came to know him through his experiences, particularly from 'In the Right Place.' But it wasn't until escorting his dear wife home from Hawaii, that I got a better understanding of his nature and character. But after hearing the remarks his daughter, Janet, and his son-in-law, Wade, that I came to understand why he was who he was.

“In the Navy, it is a great honor for a man to have a ship named after him, particularly while he is living. Through out his career, Admiral Brason had done much to promote naval aviation and help make it into the

force that it is today. Many of his contributions have had a lasting impact on the way things are done today. It took foresight on his part to see a better, more efficient way for things to be accomplished. His naval career happened to coincide with a costly war, a war that cost him personally. During the war he proved his theories when others insisted on holding to the way things had always been done.

“Having read his book, I have a better understanding of him, I see why he rose through the ranks quicker than most of his peers. In his modesty he said that he was in the right place at the right time. I now see that it was more than that. As a chaplain, I went through some intensive theological training and I have studied the lives of great men of God. As varied as their backgrounds and ministries were they all had humility and faith in God. Some were obscure in their quiet service, as Wade has described. Others like Joshua of the Old Testament were warriors.

“I would like to tell you of the kind of warrior that Admiral Brason was. One year into the Second World War, the Reprisal under his command was sent into the South Atlantic to hunt down German Raider that alluded detection and wrecked havoc on allied merchant shipping. Once his planes had found the enemy, Captain Brason formulated his plan of attack. Knowing that there were many prisoners aboard, when he sent his planes in for the attack, their orders were to disable the ship rather than sink it, in order to spare the hostages and the crew.

“However, understanding the complicities of warfare, he sent along two planes loaded with life rafts, life preservers, and provisions. As luck would have it, the ship was hit in away that caused it to sink. His wisdom, and I believe inspiration, saved many lives, including the enemy. Last night I had the opportunity to visit with one of the survivors who had been held prisoner. Her story went beyond being rescued and told not only of the compassion that he showed to her and her daughter personally, but to the German's that had been rescued when their ship was sunk.

“Last night at the viewing, I had the privilege of visiting with men who had served under his command. I learned that he had a way of being commanding without being demanding. His motto was 'Respect, Pride, Solidarity, Loyalty' and he instilled those basic principles in those who served under him. When he gave an order they complied not only out of respect for him and his authority, but also because of the man that he was. They had pride in their ship, their country, and their commander. They worked together as a unit and were loyal to him, to one another, and their country. I would have been honored to have served under him. I am proud to serve aboard a ship named in his honor and under a captain who has adopted the same motto.

“Like I said earlier, I only met him twice, but I raised my hand when Wade called for those who had been influenced in any way by Admiral Brason. I must say that having been in the presence of his family and

those who knew him best, and having heard what preceded my remarks, he has had an even greater influence on me. I too grew up in a religious home. That's why when I went to college to study psychology that I minored in theology.

"I must say that since being here, I have heard things that I had never considered before, but they ring true in my ears and in my soul. Wade spoke of the great missionary that he was. I must admit that I'm intrigued by what I have heard, and more importantly by what I have felt. So much so that before I leave, I must know more of what has been and will be spoken of here this day. Earlier I heard his grandchildren rehearse the hymn that they are about to sing. I have never heard of such pure doctrine than what is contained in the words of that hymn.

"Thank you for listening to the ramblings of a young man who still has so much to learn. I hope I have contributed to these services in my feeble attempts to pay tribute this great warrior and man of God. I have become a better man by what little I knew him, I hope to become a better man for what I have learned of him by being here.

"May God bless you and your family, Missus Brason. Amen.

While Ensign Jamison took his seat, the grandchildren and their spouses left the congregation and took their place on the stand. Directed by Norma and accompanied by Takara, they sang the hymn mentioned by Ensign Jamison.

"If you could hie to Kolob In the twinkling of an eye, And then continue onward With that same speed to fly, Do you think that you could ever, Through all eternity, Find out the generation Where Gods began to be?

"Or see the grand beginning, Where space did not extend? Or view the last creation, Where Gods and matter end? Methinks the Spirit whispers, 'No man has found pure space, Nor seen the outside curtains, Where nothing has a place.'

"The works of God continue, And worlds and lives abound; Improvement and progression Have one eternal round. There is no end to matter; There is no end to space; There is no end to spirit; There is no end to race.

"There is no end to virtue; There is no end to might; There is no end to wisdom; There is no end to light. There is no end to union; There is no end to youth; There is no end to priesthood; There is no end to truth.

"There is no end to glory; There is no end to love; There is no end to being; There is no death above. There is no end to glory; There is no end to love; There is no end to being; There is no death

above.”

While the grandkids were returning to their seats, Craig gathered his notes, stood up and walked to the pulpit. First he looked down at the casket below him, then he looked up at the congregation and began his remarks. “Thank you for the lovely rendition of that hymn. You know that was your grandfather's favorite hymn. I'd also like to thank Misti for her number as well. And Janet, you did a wonderful job of summing up Dad's life. I also appreciated the remarks made by Wade and Ensign Jamison. In the time that I have been the Bishop of the Salem Ward, I have officiated and spoken at a number of funerals, but this one is by far the most difficult. I'd like to say a few things about Dad and then attempt to offer some hope and comfort by turning to the scriptures.

“My first recollection of Dad was the summer on nineteen thirty eight, the summer that I turned seven. At the time he was attached to the newly commissioned USS Enterprise which was based in Norfolk. Since he was going to be away for a good part of the summer when the ship was on her shakedown cruise, Aunt Geannie and the kids spent that summer with her parents here in Roanoke. Dad was here on a few weekends before the ship sailed. I remember him coming to church in his Navy uniform. At the time we were members of the Green Memorial United Methodist Church. As a boy I loved airplanes, I still do, and I was impressed that he was pilot.

“That summer my mother became acquainted with Aunt Geannie as they were both on a committee for the Methodist Women's Organization. I remember on a number of occasions my mother took Norma, Janet, and me to the Austins, or Aunt Geannie would bring Sandy and Austin to our house while they worked on whatever project they had going on. Even though Austin was four years older than me, we would run around with our arms outstretched, pretending that we were flying airplanes. He proudly showed me a model airplane that he and Dad had built. That model is still displayed in Dad's study. On a few occasions, Sandy who was about thirteen at the time, babysat my sisters and me while my mother and father went out for the evening. She was a fun babysitter, because she always brought games and things to keep us entertained.

“At the end of the summer, they went back to Norfolk before moving to San Diego and eventually to Hawaii. The next thing I remember was the day that Pearl Harbor was bombed when I was ten. The whole church was concerned because they knew that the Brasons were there. Then came the tragic news that Aunt Geannie, Sandy, and Austin had been killed. My sisters and I attended their funeral with our parents and I remember how sad it was. Dad looked so lost and heartbroken.

“As the war went on, Uncle Walt, who was our minister, kept the congregation informed of Dad's whereabouts and what he was doing. He became our local hero and my personal hero. The next time I saw him was when he had been transferred back to Norfolk to take command of the Reprisal. Everyone knew

when he was home because he would buzz the neighborhood before landing at the airport.

“When he was home from time to time, he came to church where I would see him. The more Uncle Walt bragged about him, the more of hero he became to me. I'm not sure he knew who I was, although he always said he did. Then after a couple of years, I remember that he brought a pretty blond lady home with him when he was stationed in Washington, D.C.. I remember attending their wedding with my sisters and our parents.

“All through the war years he became my hero, almost larger than life. Then when the war ended they moved back to Roanoke and as Janet mentioned, he became the wrestling coach at Jefferson High School. I had been a wrestler in junior high and as a sophomore, and was anxious to try out for the varsity team. It was while on his team that I really got to know him and he got to know me.

“It was during that time, that our father was killed in a automobile accident and our mother died of cancer. When my mother told us before she died that she wanted the Brasons to adopt us, I knew that we would be in good hands and more importantly we could stay together. That is when they built their house and they let us pick out what we wanted in our own rooms. They would take us places and do things with us and just before our mother died, we actually moved in with them. Once she passed away, the adoption became final and they became our Mom and Dad.

“It was an easy transition for me, because my boyhood hero and coach was now my Dad. Not only that, but he was my girlfriend's uncle. People who don't know us find it odd that my wife calls Dad, Uncle Sheffield. We have to assure them that were aren't blood relatives. For those of you who don't know, Edith is Aunt Geannie's niece. Trust me, its really not that complicated.

“We bonded instantly and I never wanted to do anything that would displease him. He taught me how to drive and to fly and so many other things. I have been ever grateful and proud that Sheffield Brason was my Dad and he and I became much closer than I ever was with my father. For the past nearly thirty five years we have been a family.”

“I would like to say publicly how much I loved and respected my Dad. I have tried to honor him by the way I live my life. The same is true with my Mom. Mom, I love you too. You and Dad were the best things that happened to Norma, Janet, and me. I will be forever grateful to the both of you.

“Forever. That is what I would like to now talk about. Janet told of how we were baptized into the Church and were later sealed in the temple. It is the temple that binds families together for eternity. When the gospel was restored to the earth in its fullness, it included the the sealing power and the keys to bind in heaven that which is bound on earth through the power and authority of the priesthood. It was this very doctrine that Aunt Geannie was looking for that lead Dad and Mom to the Church.

“The fact that a husband and wife can be sealed together, with their children for time and all eternity is the very core doctrine in the gospel in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. This ordinance is only available to the worthy and its lasting effect is conditioned on continued worthiness. In God's mercy this ordinance is available to both the living and the dead. For example, when Edith and I were married, we were sealed in the temple. When Dad and Mom were sealed, they had already been married for a few years. And Dad was sealed to Aunt Geannie by proxy even though she had been dead for a number of years. I'm certain that they are together again and I wouldn't be too surprised if they were here with us.

“I could say much more about this, but I want to touch on another of the comforting doctrines of the church, and that is the resurrection. 'For as in Adam all die. Even so in Christ shall all be made a live.' Because the Savior died and rose again, He broke the bands of death that all men, women, and children will rise again. Quoting from Alma chapter eleven, verse forty four, 'Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body, and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.'

“Dad always said that he was excited about the part about the hair of the head. When he was younger, he had thick, black, curly hair. In fact his nickname was Curly. But it was long gone by the time I ever knew him.

“The point is, this life isn't all there is and it extends beyond mortality. We lived before were born as spirits in the presence of God. We were born into mortality to gain a physical body created in the image of God after the manner of our spirit. We are here to prove ourselves and find our way back. The gospel is here to show us the way.

“When we die, we go to the spirit world, paradise for the righteous and prison for the wicked, according to our actions and desires in this life. Much could be said about the work that goes on there. Knowing the missionary he was, I'm sure he will be active in preaching the gospel there to those who did not hear it in this life, so that they may accept the vicarious temple ordinances when they are performed in their behalf.

“Then comes the resurrection of which I have already spoken, the righteous at the Second Coming of Christ to dwell with him on the earth for a thousand years. Then at the end of the millennium, the wicked will be resurrected. At that time, all will be brought to stand before God to be judged. Those who were righteous and kept their temple ordinances in affect to dwell with their spouses and children in the presence of God and Christ in Celestial Kingdom. The less valiant to the Terrestrial Kingdom and the wicked to the Telestial

Kingdom.

“This is what is known as the plan of salvation, or the great plan of happiness. There is no more comforting doctrine than this. Will knowing this make it any easier? Probably not. It's always difficult to lose a loved one. But it does give hope and make it bearable. I can't imagine thinking that death is the end. How hopeless and unbearable that would be. But there is hope, and there will be a dawn after a dark restless night. The sting of death has been swallowed up in the Christ's victory over death. His infinite atonement not only takes away the sins of the world, but the sorrows as well, if you turn them over to Him with faith in Him and the hope of a better day.

“Mom is putting on a brave face in a show of strength. I'm proud of her for it. But I know the grief she feels in her heart. She will have tough days ahead, especially after the company goes home, the flowers wilt, and everyone goes about there lives. Dad was her life. They still had a lot of plans and dreams to fulfill, but they have been cut short. Please remember her in your prayers, and in thought and deed over the next several months.

“I testify of the truth of the things that I and others have spoken this day. Jesus Christ lives and because he does, so shall Dad and everyone of us. Making covenants, receiving the ordinances, remaining faithful, and the grace of Christ do bring the greatest blessings imaginable. Dad lived a faithful life and will enjoy the promised blessings. May we do the same that we too may enjoy them and one day be with Dad, our Savior Jesus Christ, and our Heavenly Father in worlds without end. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen

“The congregation will now sing 'God be with you till we meet again.' The benediction will be offered by Todd Brason after which the internment will be in the Roanoke City Cemetery. The family and friends are invited to return to the church after the graveside services for a luncheon sponsored by the Salem Ward Relief Society.”

After Todd's benediction, the congregation rose to their feet. The pallbearers stepped forward and took their positions and rolled the casket out through the funeral doors at the side of the chapel, the honor guard fell in behind. Ramona, escorted by Commander Ruebens, followed right behind. Craig and Janet, who had been seated on the stand came down and fell in with the family as they filed out.

Once the casket was loaded into the hearse, the detail got back into their rented van. The family and others mingled briefly outside. The temperature had warmed up about thirty degrees with a stiff breeze and partly cloudy skies. Those going to the cemetery got into their cars and formed the funeral procession. With a police car leading the way, the procession drove south on Electric Road and turned left onto Roanoke Boulevard, which eventually turns into Shenandoah Avenue. After a right turn onto Williamson Road and left onto Tazwell, it was only two or three blocks to cemetery. The drive took a twenty minutes to travel the eight

and three quarter miles from the stake center to the cemetery.

Of those from the Spirit World who had attended the funeral, all of them returned through the veil, except for Curly, Geannie, Sandy, Austin, Charles Emmett, Emmett, and Ellen, who went directly to the cemetery and waited for procession of mourners to arrive.

"I always thought this was such a pretty place." Geannie said, referring the cemetery. "I appreciated how you always put fresh cut flowers from your yard on my grave on Memorial Day."

Gazing down into the freshly dug grave, Curly noticed something. "Look he said, when they dug the grave they scrapped up against your casket. See there's part of the side."

"How nice." Geannie laughed, "At least we'll be able to snuggle up to each other down there."

When the funeral procession arrived, the cars parked along the side of road and everyone migrated to the open grave and huddled together to keep warm. Once everyone had gathered, Ensign Jamison took charge of the detail. Leading the way, the honor guard marched in unison behind the, with Chief Riviers and his men marching behind in single file, with their obsolete ceremonial M14 rifles with fixed bayonets over their shoulders. As they neared the grave they filed off and took up position fifty feet off to the side. The pallbearers set the casket down on the lowering mechanism and stepped back and assumed parade rest.

Bishop Brason stepped forward and said. "On behalf of the family, thank you for being here as we lay to rest Patriarch Sheffield Brason. He have heard a fitting tribute to this great man who had many titles through his long productive life. But God doesn't judge a man by the titles and potions he held in this life but on the intent of his heart, his commitment to truth, his obedience to divine commandments, and how he treated others.

"This man being laid to rest has measured up to those tests, whether in his service to our great nation, our community, the church, and particularly to his family. And now he goes on to further service in ways we mortals only have a inkling of. While his body is at rest, here, until the morning of the the resurrection, he will be laboring in the spirit world to bring about the purposes of God.

"It's a cold blustery day, so I will end my remarks as Bishop but would like to say as a son, thank you Dad for all you have done for us as a family. We will all miss you but your memory and your example will always be with us. You have taught us well. We love you and honor and bless your name as we strive to live as we have been taught by you. And so we teach our children and our grandchildren until the last generation of your posterity.

"Now, the grave will be dedicated by Jerry Gover. After which the honor guard from the USS Brason will render military honors. Jerry."

Jerry stepped forward, clasped his hands and bowed his head. "Our Father in Heaven." he prayed. "We

are here to lay to rest our husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather. In doing so, by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood I dedicate and consecrate this burial plot as the resting place for the body of Sheffield Brason. Bless this spot of earth that it be hallowed ground and protected until the morning of the resurrection when his body shall be called forth and be reunited with his spirit as an immortal being to dwell on the earth for a thousand years with his posterity in the presence of thy Son until the final judgment.

“Father, I invoke thy blessings upon us, his family, that we may be comforted and strengthened. As we return to this place in memorial, may it remind us of the life he lived but also remember that he is not here for he yet lives in the world of spirits. May we strive to be worthy to rejoin him as such a time as we are called upon to leave this life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”

On cue, Chief Rivers stepped forward two paces and made a sharp left turn and barked, “Honor guard, attention!”

The seven sailors, who had been standing at parade rest with their rifles at their sides, the butts resting on the ground, snapped to attention, angling the top of their rifles forward.

“Port arms.”

In perfect unison, the honor guard brought their rifles up into a forty five degree angle four inches from the chest.

“Ready.”

The detail stepped forward with their left feet.

“Aim.”

The squad brought their rifles up to a thirty five degree angle putting their heads to the rifle aiming their weapons, with the index finger is on the trigger.

“Fire!”

A loud crack rang through the air as all seven men fired their rifles at the same instant. The detail then simultaneously lowered their rifles to the port arms position.

Again Chief Rivers gave the orders “Ready... Aim... Fire!” and a second volley rang out.

One more time, Chief Rivers gave the orders “Ready... Aim... Fire!” and a third and final volley rang out.

Following the final volley, Chief Rivers ordered, “Present Arms.”

Each man in the honor guard brought his M14 to a position directly in front of them perpendicular to the ground, the left hand grasping the rifle just above the magazine and the right hand grasping it by the small of the butt.

While holding that position, Musician Third Class Rodriguez played Taps on his bugle from a remote corner of the cemetery.

As the haunting melody faded, Chief Rivers ordered, "Port arms." Moving as one, the seven sailors positioned their rifles diagonally across their chests, with the muzzle to pointing upward to the left.

The six pall bearers stepped up to the casket and ever so smartly took up the flag and folded it into a neat triangle. Boatswains Mate Second Class Barbarossa reverently handed it off to Ensign Jamison. Holding it in his the left hand held out horizontally, close to his body at his waist with his fingers together, he held the folded flag with the straight side nearest his body and gently held in place by his right hand which he placed on top of the flag at a ninety degree angle to the other, he stepped slowly and gracefully to Ramona who was flanked by her three children with Commander Reubends standing directly behind her. The young Ensign bowed slightly as he presented Ramona with the flag.

Chief Rivers final order was, "Right face." They all rose the right toe and left heel slightly and pivoted ninety degrees to the right on the balls of their left feet. With Ensign Jamison in the lead, followed by Chef Rivers, the honor guard marched off and the pall bearers fell in behind.

As they marched back to the their van, Craig invited everyone, including the Brason detail to return to the church for the luncheon. Because of the cold breeze, the crowd broke up rather quickly and returned to their cars. Ramona, Craig and Edith, Norma and Wade, Janet and Jerry, and Commander Ruebens, who was a step behind, lingered a moment longer, each in their own thoughts.

Noticing the shell casings on the ground, Commander Ruebens stooped down and picked up one and handed to Ramona. He then stooped down and gathered four more. He gave one each to Craig, Norma, and Janet. He said as he slipped the fourth one into his own pocket, "Keep these as a memorial to the service your husband and father rendered to this country. As for mine, I intend to have it framed and displayed on the bridge of the Brason."

After a minute or two, Craig, Norma, Janet, their spouses, and Commander Ruebens walked back to their cars. Only Ramona stood there alone. "Goodbye Babe." she said softly. "I'm going to miss you so much, but I'm sure I'll get by. I've been here before, you know. I just want to say thank you for loving me and being there for me. We've certainly had quite and adventure over the years, haven't we?"

As she spoke, Sheffield left Geannie's side and drew near to let her know that everything was alright. She must of felt his presence because she drew in a deep breath as if to breath in his spirit.

"Good bye, Ramona." he said in return. "I'll come for you one day. Until then, know that I love you. I will always love you. Its time that I go now. Although I'm saddened to leave you, I'm actually quite excited to see whats on the other side."

Ramona whispered "I love you too." as she turned to return to the car. Commander Reubens, who was waiting a short distance away, took her by the arm and led her back to the car.

When Sheffield returned to Geannie's side, she asked, "Are you ready to go, Curly?"

Sheffield looked back at Ramona once more, then answered, "Lets go."

As they stepped through the veil, they passed through a portal of light as they entered the spirit world.

* * * * *

A three volley salute rendered in honor of the deceased veteran is often mistaken by the laymen as a 21-gun salute, although it is entirely different. In the military, a "gun" is a large-caliber weapon like a cannon. In this instance the three volleys are fired from rifles, not guns.

At the time "If You Could Hie to Kolob was sung to a different tune. It wasn't until 1985 that it was put with the tune it is now known by.