

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
Oral History Telephone Interview with Martha Susan Clapsaddle Faley
General Clapsaddle's daughter and married Lt. Tom Faley,
1963-1964
Telephone Interview by Mary Rasa, NPS January 23, 2006
Transcribed by Mary Rasa, 2011



A tea in the Officers' Club. Photo from Officers' Wives Club Scrapbook, 1963.



Lt. and Mrs. Thomas Faley, General and Mrs. Clapsaddle, Peter Clapsaddle



The Faley's Wedding at the Fort Hancock Post Chapel
Photos courtesy of NPS/Gateway NRA

Editor's Note in parenthesis ()

MR: This is January 23, 2006. My name is Mary Rasa. I am the Sandy Hook Museum Curator and I am doing an (telephone) oral history interview and please state your full name.

SF: Martha Susan Clapsaddle C-L-A-P as in Paul-S-A-D-D-L-E Faley F-A-L-E-Y.

MR: Okay and thank you very much. And you go by Susan, right?

SF: I go by Susan, yeah.

MR: Okay. What I am going to do is first ask you when and where you were born?

SF: January 31, 1945 at Fort Benning, Georgia.

MR: And where did you graduate from high school?

SF: I graduated from Baker High School in Columbus, Georgia.

MR: And that whole time you were with your Father traveling?

SF: Yes, and we were at Fort Benning. We were at Fort Benning.

MR: Okay. Tell me about your Father, a little bit about your Father?

SF: He was a 1940 graduate of the United States Military Academy. He was born and raised in Roanoke, Virginia. And he has one Brother, a Dr. Gene Clapsaddle who is retired now from his

practice, but who still lives in the Roanoke area. I had one Brother, Peter William Clapsaddle who is an architect in Roanoke, Virginia. And my Father was a thirty year career officer. One of the last assignments, one of the last assignments that we had before I got married, he was Commanding Officer of 2nd Division Artillery at Fort Benning, Georgia. Then he spent one year in Korea. My senior year in high school he was in Korea. We stayed in Battle Park, which was a housing development right outside of Fort Benning and I attended high school there at Baker High School. He went on to do more of his military career. Mary?

MR: Yes, Yes. Go ahead.

SF: He was a World War II veteran and served in the Guadalcanal Campaign. He spent three years in Washington, D.C. as Deputy Comptroller at the Pentagon. At that time we lived at 121 South Irving Street, Arlington, Virginia. And I attended junior high school there and my Brother was in grade school.

MR: So how many different schools did you end up going to?

SF: I would, let me think a minute, Mary. I would say eight.

MR: And you also went overseas at some point, right?

SF: I went overseas, yes.

MR: Where were you?

SF: We were in Heidelberg, Germany. As an infant, as an eighteen month old, right after the War we were in Bad Tolz T-O-L-Z, Germany, which is a part of Austria. And in later years, I was twelve years old when we came back and we lived in Heidelberg, Germany. And there he was part of the Comptroller's Staff for U.S. Army Europe. And then he came home and he went to the Army War College here in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania and I went to Stevens Elementary School at that time which was in downtown Carlisle. There we lived, we weren't able to get housing right at the War College so we took substandard housing off Post. From there we went to D.C. and after that we went to Benning.

MR: Oh, okay.

SF: And then he, my freshman year at junior college he was at the National War College. At that time, it was very unusual. You had to be assured of promotion in order to go to the Army War College and the National War College at Fort McNair, Virginia. And he spent a year there. And from there we went to (Fort) Hancock.

MR: Okay. And how old were you when your parents went to Hancock?

SF: I was, let me think a minute, I was eighteen.

MR: Oh, okay. And were you attending some classes at college?

SF: I attended a junior business college. The Washington School for Secretaries at 14th and M Street. (Washington, D.C.)

MR: Okay. So what year was it when he was assigned at Fort Hancock?

SF: He was assigned there in 1963.

MR: And at that point in time his rank was....

SF: Full Colonel.

MR: Okay, and he was with the missile...

SF: No, he was promoted at Fort Hancock, excuse me. He was promoted to Brigadier General at Fort Hancock.

MR: And with the missiles as opposed to...?

SF: With the Air Defense.

MR: Okay, as opposed to the Garrison, it was?

SF: Yeah.

MR: Oh, okay.

SF: There was a Post Commander. His name was Colonel McArdle. M-C-capital A-R-D-L-E.

MR: Okay. So a lot of times he....

SF: He got the 52nd Artillery Command which included three states; Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey.

MR: Okay and was his Headquarters in Highlands (Army Air Defense Site) at the time?

SF: His Headquarters at that time was on Post (Fort Hancock).

MR: Oh, okay. Did he use helicopter for transportation a lot?

SF: Yes. Yes he did.

MR: Where would they pick him up?

SF: Right outside the Quarters 12.

MR: On the field?

SF: Right by the seawall.

MR: Oh really. (laughter)

SF: Yeah.

MR: That must have been kind of interesting to watch.

SF: It was. We had a good time.

MR: Now, did you attend classes while you were at Hancock?

SF: No, I went to work in Long Branch.

MR: Okay. Where did you work?

SF: As a legal secretary for Stanley Cohen.

MR: Okay. Did you have a car to get there?

SF: No I did not. I took the bus.

MR: Where did you get the bus from?

SF: I got the bus on the Highlands Bridge right there where the old hotel used to be.

MR: MmmHmm. Sounds like it was an interesting place to be living.

SF: It was. It was fascinating.

MR: What was your Mother's name?

SF: Martha.

MR: Okay. So she was the Honorary President of the Officers' Wives Club?

SF: Yes Ma'am.

MR: And what types of things did they do?

SF: They had various, they broke down the unit into smaller units. They had unit coffees and they had a luncheon once a month.

MR: Okay and...

SF: Entertaining wise, they did an awful lot of entertaining.

MR: Did you go at all or ?

SF: Did I what?

MR: Did you go at all to see what was going on?

SF: Oh yes.

MR: What would be typical?

SF: Of entertaining wise?

MR: Mmmhmm.

SF: Ah, General Duff. D-U-F-F who was out a NORAD, the North American Air Defense Command, was there, I would say he was there for lunch at least once a week for a formal luncheon.

MR: Really.

SF: And they had cocktail parties and they had dinner parties.

MR: And some fashion shows.

SF: And fashion shows, yes.

MR: Now would your Mother participate or was she basically the honorary?

SF: Oh, no. She was very active.

MR: Okay.

SF: For, I use the phrase myself when my Husband became a Battalion Commander, she told publicly she said her door was always open and it was.

MR: Could you tell me a little bit about the house that you lived in?

SF: Yes. Now do you want room by room?

MR: Well, give us an overview. You were living in Quarters 12, which is the Commanding Officer's Quarters.

SF: Yes.

MR: Sure. I guess, start on the first floor with say, the living room.

SF: Do you want to start in the kitchen?

MR: Oh, sure. We can start in the kitchen

SF: In the back door.

MR: Oh sure. Which you used back door most often?

SF: We used the back door most of the time, yeah. The wind was strong and water came up in your face. When you entered the back porch, or what there was of a back porch there was a little, I mean my Father kept his fishing equipment and what not out there. You came in the kitchen and there was a red formica kitchen table with six matching chairs. As I remember the counters at that time were yellow. Once you got into the kitchen, to the very right of the kitchen through that door was a laundry room.

MR: MmmHmm.

SF: But when you were in the kitchen, towards the back of the kitchen where your refrigerator might be, in the back of the counter was a pantry and she used that a lot. Then there was a butler's pantry, no there wasn't. That was Fort Benning. Walking into the hallway going, they used the formal living room and an informal den.

MR: Okay.

SF: There right there at the bottom of the stairs where that bathroom is, that was purple bathroom, but the way.

MR: Oh.

SF: Well, I mean, she decorated it that way. The walls weren't purple but it had a purple rug and purple toilet seat and white curtains with yellow daisies and a purple border, right there underneath the staircase.

MR: Mmmhmm.

SF: But also right there beside the bathroom door in the hallway, my Father built furniture as a hobby and he had his bar there at an angle.

MR: Okay.

SF: And then going on into the hallway if you turn to your left where the glassed in doors are, that was their den.

MR: Okay.

SF: And they had rattan furniture in there and that was where the TV was.

MR: That was where you spent a lot of your time?

SF: That was where we spent most of our casual time. And as I recall there was also a fireplace in there.

MR: Yes.

SF: And then directly across from that was the more formal living room where they had their formal furniture. And there was a red broquet couch and a green silk chair in there and a rocking chair I believe and a coffee table and two end tables. The dining room, which you get there through the kitchen.

MR: Yes.

SF: It has a green Quartermaster rug on the floor. I believe there was also a fireplace in there. Instead of her own table, it wasn't big enough to serve all of these people when they entertained, they put that in storage and she had a Quartermaster dining room table in there.

MR: So, did she own a lot of furniture and then the quartermaster would supply extra?

SF: Oh yeah. My Father, he built beautiful furniture. My Daughters have some of it today and I have a corner cupboard that he built. But there were extra in the formal living room, by extra I mean extra chairs and what not.

MR: Right.

SF: And then upstairs as you wind around the staircase, when you come to the top of the stairs the door to the far left was my Father's office and dressing room where he kept all his uniforms and stuff. There was a chiffonier in there I believe, a built in chiffonier. And his desk was there against the wall overlooking the bay. Then their room was directly through there and there was a four post bed there and a dressing table and two chests of drawers. And out in the hallway as you came out of their bedroom was a Quartermaster buffet.

MR: Oh okay.

SF: Dresser, excuse me. Well, they could be used as either one.

MR: Sure.

SF: And then my room, which was across the hall, directly across the hall, had twin maple beds and a dresser and a chest of drawers and then there was a fireplace in there too. And I had, I

looked over to our neighbors, my bedroom looked over to the neighbors. But I could see the (Sandy Hook) Bay. I could see the seawall from my bedroom window.

MR: Right. And then where was your Brother?

SF: And then my Brother was down the hall to the left. And that room was furnished. Then the bathroom was across the hall from his room. I believe then there was a guest room.

MR: Right. There is another room up there.

SF: I believe there was a guest room with Quartermaster beds; single beds.

MR: Now the third floor did you use that just for storage?

SF: Pardon me?

MR: Was the third floor just for storage?

SF: The third floor was for storage mainly. Yes.

MR: Now did your Father have somebody who was a valet?

SF: Yes. His name was Marshall. He was a black soldier..

MR: Mmmhmm.

SF: And his name was Marshall and he took care of my Dad's uniforms and shoes. And my Mother trained him as a house boy. He did light housework; floors and that kind of thing. Buffing, waxing and buffing floors.

MR: Did she ever have any maids?

SF: No.

MR: Okay.

SF: There was just Marshall and she taught him how to cook.

MR: (laughter)

SF: I'm serious.

MR: Really.

SF: He knew nothing whatsoever. He was married.

MR: Ah huh.

SF: And he knew nothing about cooking.

MR: Did he live on Post as well?

SF: He lived in the Barracks, yeah.

MR: Oh, okay. Because that is a big house to take care of.

SF: Yes. No. I remember cleaning that house.

MR: I guess so.

SF: But like I said there was something going on all the time. There were bridal showers and baby showers. Many times we had those right there in the quarters for the people because they were the largest set of quarters on Post and there weren't any little kids running around.

MR: Sure. Well, did you end up, did they still have calls at that point in time or was that all done with? Like calls where they would come and visit?

SF: Calling on people, you mean?

MR: Yes.

SF: That was beginning to taper off, Mary.

MR: Ah huh.

SF: But I remember the days when they did that.

MR: Right.

SF: Everywhere they went my parents would call on their new commanding officer.

MR: So, because your Father was the commanding, you would get some visits I would assume?

SF: Yes. Yes. And at Fort Hancock, see we lived in Quarters 13 for awhile.

MR: Oh, okay,

SF: Because we camped out there. There was just Quartermaster furniture in there.

MR: Mmmhmm.

SF: Ours was being painted.

MR: Oh, okay when you first got there.

SF: When we first got there they didn't have time to finish it so we camped out. We slept on mattresses on the floor. I mean the kitchen had like utensils like I guess the Quartermasters' closet or whatever. There was always a Friday night fish fry on my front porch.

MR: Oh really.

SF: Oh yeah.

MR: Well, did your Father just go out in the (Sandy Hook) Bay and fish?

SF: He would, no, he would go out in the Bay. He went out with Doc out at the Coast Guard Station.

MR: Okay.

SF: He and Doc were big buddies.

MR: Okay.

SF: And Doc would take him out. And they would deep sea fish. And he was the happiest when he was woodworking or fishing. (laughter) I'm serious.

MR: What did he catch typically?

SF: Striped bass. He would clam and fillet them and stuff them.

MR: Really.

SF: Put them on the grill and corn and baked potatoes and green bean casserole and salad and potato salad. You name it. It was so pleasant out on that screened in front porch in the evenings I mean all of us... You needed a sweater by nine o'clock.

MR: I'm sure.

SF: But we never knew how many people were coming. It was just sort of open house.

MR: It was kind of just the other officer families would come?

SF: Neighbors and what not and my Husband before he was my Husband and just family. When family was visiting maybe there. You never knew who was going to show up and they were always welcome.

MR: So, he was pretty much had an open door for everyone.

SF: He did. Yep he did. And there was a Major Weslen at the time I don't remember what part the had, I believe he had a (commanded) Battery. But they lived to the right of us if you stand on my front porch down there by the duplexes.

MR: Mmm hmm.

SF: He made a terrible mistake, Mary. He was trying to cook out and the fire wasn't going the way he wanted it to so he threw paint thinner on it.

MR: Oh God.

SF: And struck a match.

MR: Oh.

SF: And he had serious, they didn't think he was going to live. But they airlifted him to Brooke and my Father went with him that night and stayed with him the entire night until the next day. Until, I mean he was horribly burned. The pipe that he had been holding was charred to his hand. But he lived to tell the story and it's amazing. But I'll never forget that night. It was late at night.

MR: The helicopters, did they stay at Hancock?

SF: No, they did not.

MR: Oh, okay.

SF: No, they did not.

MR: Do you know where they came from?

SF: I knew you were gonna ask me that. Tom would know that.

MR: Just out of curiosity.

SF: Yeah. Tom would know that.

MR: Were they, I guess they were Army operated.

SF: Oh, yeah, warrants, warrant officers.

MR: Oh okay. So tell me a little about, so you Father basically ran all the batteries in New York, New Jersey and southern Pennsylvania.

SF: Yeah, he answered to Colorado Springs. (NORAD)

MR: Oh, okay. Were there ever any alerts that you remember?

SF: Yes. There were.

MR: What would they do during them?

SF: Yes there were. You'll have to ask...They would bring the missiles up out of the ground, Mary. And actually run, run, they did everything but fire them.

MR: Okay. Did you know of any other civilians that worked on the Post? Did you ever see any civilians?

SF: Yes. In the bio lab. (marine laboratories)

MR: Oh okay.

SF: From the bio lab and the people down at the Coast Guard Station that worked.

MR: Okay. What were the total years that you were there?

SF: I left in '64.

MR: Oh okay.

SF: They stayed another year.

MR: They stayed to '65.

SF: Then they moved to Fort Hamilton, New York.

MR: Okay. Did you go to the Officers' Club for other than the Officers' Wives functions? Did you ever go there for...

SF: Yes, we were there almost every night.

MR: Oh, okay.

SF: We would, the only thing he (Tom) could afford, I would get home from work and he picked me up from work or picked me up at the bus stop. I would go home and change and then we would go out and it was very informal. People even brought their dogs. He had bought Ranger, a white German Sheppard at the time.

MR: Mmmhmm.

SF: Shortly after we were engaged, and the puppy would go. But the puppy would chew through the rungs of the chairs. (laughter) But we would sit there and drink beer with the other lieutenants and captains.

MR: Well, tell me about preparing to get married and having the wedding out at Fort Hancock.

SF: Oh my goodness, that was...well we were engaged in April. He gave me my ring in April.

MR: What year was that?

SF: 1963.

MR: Okay.

SF: It should be 1964. I'm sorry. And he gave me my ring in April and we planned the wedding for the 6th of June, 1964.

MR: Wow, that was quick.

SF: Yeah. It was. And my Mother and I did a tap dance. Boy, I tell you what, I had to buy luggage. I had to find a gown. I tell you what, I found a gown at Bamberger's. And the wedding consultant at that time was Jane. I can't remember her last name.

MR: Was this in the Monmouth Mall?

SF: Yes. She came to the wedding. There is a picture of her in my wedding album. And we bought a dress and trousseau and a dress for the honeymoon. And his first assignment was to be Fort Campbell, Kentucky. And at that time, and he will tell you this too, he branch transferred from Air Defense Artillery to Infantry. And so his first, our first assignment as a married couple was Fort Campbell, Kentucky. And we, my Parents did all the food themselves.

MR: And where was the reception.

SF: The reception was at the Officers' Club.

MR: Okay and you also had the ceremony in the Chapel.

SF: The ceremony was in the Chapel, yes.

MR: Did you have a bridal party?

SF: I did. I had six bridesmaids.

MR: Oh wow.

SF: And Tom had six groomsmen.

MR: And were they all in the military?

SF: They were all military. Yeah.

MR: What was his rank at the time?

SF: My husband?

MR: Yes.

SF: First lieutenant.

MR: Okay. And was he living in the Bachelor Officers' Quarters?

SF: Yes. He did. He did live right down the street. He did live in Highlands (Army Air Defense Site).

MR: Okay.

SF: He had lived in Highlands but that BOQ (Bachelor Officers' Quarters) there had a tar paper roof on it and the heat just sort of simmered down. You could just sort of feel the steam so you know they were going to improve on that and he asked to be moved on down closer to his job and closing to the washer machine and dryer. I did his laundry. My Father had fits about that. (laughter) Yeah he lived in the BOQ.

MR: How did you meet him?

SF: I met him when he came to work for my Dad.

MR: Oh okay.

SF: I had known him before. I had been in love with somebody else and he dumped me and I was on the mend. It took a while. It wasn't a typical rebound. But he was so different from anybody. He talked all the time. He just talked. My Father said when he interviewed him he said, "Susan you will never be interested in this guy. All he does is talk." (laughter) So we hustled. And the mess hall made my cake. My Mother went out and bought all the ingredients.

MR: Ah huh.

SF: And we got a photograph out of magazine and that's who made my cake.

MR: Oh really. So was the Officers' Club, did you have to do the decorating in there?

SF: My Mother did that. My Mother did that. She used her Army Navy tablecloth. We took the flowers from the Chapel. We took them over there. Or they did. They took them over there.

But the Club at that time was so nice. The Dressing Room, the Ladies Room was beautiful. And the staircase, I threw my garter at the top of the staircase. I threw my garter and my bouquet.

MR: How many guests did you have?

SF: I would estimate one hundred and fifty.

MR: And did you have people that you knew from other military post, like friends that you had?

SF: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. As a matter of fact, Colonel Gordon Holderman was there. He was at Fort Totten, New York. We had been friends since Heidelberg, Germany. They had known my Parents since we were in Germany when I was little. And other friends came up from D.C., family and neighbors.

MR: Did you still have family living in Virginia?

SF: I do, yes. My Mother lives in Roanoke in my Grandmother's house, oddly enough. She redid my Grandmother's house. And my Uncle the doctor is still right outside of Roanoke. He's still there.

MR: Okay, I am just going to pause because I have to flip the tape over. Okay, anything else about your wedding? Did you drive away in a nice car?

SF: Tom had gotten his best friend to hide the car, to hide his car. He had a Chevrolet Impala convertible. And he hid it over by the old casemates so they wouldn't pin it up. And we went out. We had reservations for the Howard Johnson's in...What the next town?

MR: In Middletown?

SF: Probably yeah. I was gonna say Red Bank but it wasn't that far. But at that time it was a brand new Howard Johnson's. He took me for a steak dinner. Of course I couldn't eat a bite. Then we went the motel. Then the next morning we got up and went to Ocean City, Maryland for our honeymoon.

MR: Okay. How long did you...

SF: We were there five days.

MR: Okay. So you were given about a week's leave then?

SF: He was given about a week's leave. Yeah.

MR: So, then you moved into the BOQ?

SF: No.

MR: No. Okay I thought you did.

SF: We came back and moved out stuff, you know, his footlocker and at that time they called it hold baggage I guess to go onto (Fort) Campbell. His footlocker and his uniforms and things like that. But we came back and packed up. I had all my wedding gifts and my wedding gifts had all been displayed in the formal living room on our table. And it was really pretty in there. My Mother had it decorated with satin bows and everything and a pretty pink tablecloth. And we did that. And then we went to get the dog who his Parents had kept.

MR: Oh, okay.

SF: Okay. For the wedding and the honeymoon. And then drove from there to Campbell.

MR: Oh, so you immediately left.

SF: Yeah. Yeah. He had to be there.

MR: Where did his parents live?

SF: His parents were in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

MR: Oh okay.

SF: His mother is still on Camp Hill here.

MR: So anything, while you were at Hancock did you go into New York often?

SF: No we didn't as a matter of fact. No we didn't. Tom used to hang out around down there when he was a cadet. But I never...now my parents went in for various parties but I did not.

MR: Oh, okay. Did they have any dances that you went to?

SF: Yes there were dances. There was always a Christmas Dance and a New Years Dance. And...

MR: Did you Father do, did they still have the Commanding Officer New Year's Day (gathering) at his house?

SF: Yes they did. The entire Brigade came to the house. And it was staggered.

MR: They gave them different time to come?

SF: Different times. Yes. And I did that in Germany one time when Tom had a battalion. I still do that. At that time that was still going. As a matter of fact, Mary, even at Fort Monroe in 1992 when he retired there were still New Year's receptions.

MR: Oh really.

SF: Oh yes. That was big thing.

MR: Anything else about entertaining or parties or any other things that you would like to talk about?

SF: They were arranged from very casual like I said to formal. There was always a “Hail and Farewell” once a month.

MR: Did that kind of take the place of the calls?

SF: Yes it did. Yes it did. Yes. It certainly did.

MR: Anybody that you remember that was interesting or any interesting stories?

SF: Ah. No not really.

MR: Did anybody on Officers’ Row have any servants helping out; any maids or anything?

SF: Pardon me?

MR: Did any of the officers’ wives have any maid helping them out?

SF: Ah, Ann Marie McKay, my matron of honor, I believe she was she got pregnant right after we got married. She got help. And they lived down in one of the duplexes along the street.

MR: Oh okay.

SF: But you didn’t see you were isolated, Mary. There wasn’t much to buy from.

MR: I was just curious.

SF: I mean it was Long Branch and Sea Bright and Atlantic Highlands. There was really not that much there.

MR: I assume that you would have to go to Fort Monmouth to get groceries and...

SF: We went to Fort Monmouth. Yes. And we used, at that time we used the beach there at Hancock. But at that time it was run by Fort Monmouth.

MR: Okay. It was the Army Rec(reation) Center.

SF: Yes.

MR: Did they have concession stands and things like that there?

SF: Just a second. Tom just walked in.

(distant talking to Tom) There wasn't a concession stand on the beach was there?

Yes. Yes. There was.

MR: At that point in time was there a separation between Enlisted Mens' Beach and Officers?
Or was it all together?

SF: It was all together.

MR: Oh okay. Because in the past they had separated them.

SF: Yeah.

MR: Anything else you would like to talk about?

SF: Oh, it was a wonderful experience. I mean the beauty of just being there with the water all around you; the Lighthouse and whatnot. Tom and I used to take long walks. Walk around the end of the Hook and back. Got me lost one time. (laughter)

MR: Did you get to go up in the Lighthouse ever?

SF: He corrected himself. He said earlier at the Fort Hancock beach there was not a concession stand. When it became First Army Beach there was.

MR: Oh, okay. Sure.

SF: So, but we went for long walks. My Mother rode bicycles ever night. Walked the dog and just had a wonderful time.

MR: Okay. And oh, was your Brother still in school at the time?

SF: My Brother was still in school. Yes.

MR: So he went to Middletown High School?

SF: Yes. He did.

MR: So, I guess you would have seen some people from the local community that were his friends coming out to visit?

SF: Yes. He had friends that came out.

MR: Did they like coming out to the Fort?

SF: They did. Yes. They certainly did. And they I mean, there was no danger you could walk to the beach.

MR: Right. Okay. I am going to stop the tape. Thank you very much.

SF: Well, thank you Mary.

END OF INTERVIEW