

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
Oral History Interview with Col. Thomas Faley
General Clapsaddle's Aide, 1963-1964
Telephone Interview by Mary Rasa, NPS 1/23/06
Transcribed by Laura Bruzek, 2009



The Faley's Wedding at the Fort Hancock Post Chapel



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

Note: Corrections to interview are noted in Parenthesis ().

MR: Please state your full name.

TF: Thomas E. Faley.

MR: And you retired with what rank?

TF: A rank of Colonel. Full Bird Colonel.

MR: Okay. And do you give your permission to the National Park Service to use this tape?

TF: Gladly, yes I do.

MR: Okay.

TF: I really support this project, because it's history. It needs to be captured. It was a great time.

MR: Okay great, alright - thank you very much, and let's start. When and where were you born?

TF: I was born in 1939. November 28th in the little town of Somerset, Pennsylvania. It's an interchange on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The situation, my father was a civil engineer and he designed one of the - he was part of a team that designed the Laurel Hill Tunnel on the Turnpike. That's why they were located there, my family, and that's where I was born.

MR: Okay and where did you attend school?

TF: I attended school in various places, Somerset, Pittsburg, and then in Harrisburg.

MR: Okay. Did you move around because his job moved around?

TF: That's right. He was a civil engineer and he tended to move with the jobs.

MR: And, so where did you graduate high school from?

TF: I graduated from Harrisburg. I went to high school years in Harrisburg. And from there, Mary, I went to what's called Dickenson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. I went there for a year and I won an appointment of the, to West Point that freshman year, and then at the end of the year, entered West Point. Now, I had to start over again. West Point, those rules are they don't give you credit, ya know, for what you've done. You gotta start over again.

MR: So you started over as a freshman?

TF: It's a four-year program, unless there's a major war going on, it's a four-year program.

MR: Okay.

TF: And then I went to West Point, and I graduated from West Point in 1962.

MR: Then what was your first assignment?

TF: As an Air Defense Officer.

MR: Okay.

TF: My first assignment – I first had volunteered for what they called the, first I went to the Air Defense Officer Basic Course and every Air Defense Officer, before they went to the Nike site, had to go to, it just qualified you to function on the site. Then I volunteered to go to what's called the Airborne, the Jump School in (at) the Ranger School and I went to both training, graduated from both as an Airborne Ranger.

MR: Oh, really?

TF: Then in March, then in March, first week of March, I reported in to a Nike site and it was called, it was Amityville. Battery A, Battery A. (3rd BN, 51st Artillery)

MR: Oh, in New York.

TF: Yes, ma'am. It was a New York Defense Sector, it was up in Amityville called Battery A. And it was a single site. It was not a double site like what you had at Fort Hancock. But it was a single site and I was called what was then a Launcher Platoon Leader. It was an exciting time because in the Launcher Platoon, it was a huge, it was a large platoon. You had about 50 people. So it was exciting. A normal platoon, like in the infantry, was running about 32 – 32, 33. Air Defense Platoons were larger because of the launcher business. So, it was an exciting period of time. Then in June, early June, the word went out that they wanted a, (aide) they wanted to nominate me. The general was looking for aide. And each battalion, it was a new general coming in. Clapsaddle, Clarence Clapsaddle, Sue's dad, and he was looking for an aide. So each battalion sent one. Now the New York battalion's headquarters was at Fort Tilden. Old Fort Tilden, New York. And (Lt.) Colonel Grays (Gordon Smith) was the commander if I remember, I better just, I don't, I believe that was the name. Anyhow, the battalion headquarters was Fort Tilden. The battalion commander nominated me to represent that Battalion in the interview. So I went to the interview. Didn't know how I went. The only time that I thought maybe I had a chance is her Dad asked me to stand up next to him and he was checking me against his height. He was 5'10" and I was 5'10". I thought, well he may be serious. And there was, if he's sizing me, this interview may be going pretty well. Do ya see what I mean? But I had no indications. He said he'd get back to me. And then I don't know what Sue, did you say anything to Sue about the selection of the aide at all? Okay, anyhow.

MR: No. That's interesting. First of all, was your interview at Fort Hancock or was it in the Highlands?

TF: It was the Highlands.

MR: Okay.

TF: That's where in June '63, that's where the Brigade was headquartered.

MR: Okay.

TF: Up there in the little headquarters in Highlands, Atlantic Highlands. And it made sense because they were right next to the Missile Master, the big Missile Master coming in, the big radar site on the same hill, in other words, just one hill behind it.

MR: So the Missile Master was under the General though right? Or was that separate?

TF: Separate, so. That was the equivalent of what you would call his operating headquarters, in other words. He had what was called Administrative Headquarters but Missile Master was the Operating Headquarters. They were tied into McGuire Air Force Base. And if a plane was coming in, a simulated or a real enemy plane, let's say a simulated 'cause they ran exercises. The Air Force would pick them up first at McGuire with their long range radars, then they would pass the target down to the Highlands people, to the people up at Atlantic Highlands, called, it was called Missile Master, Missile Master.

MR: Right.

TF: They passed it down there. And they had in that, it was a sizable enemy, they had in the Missile Master business, there were probably 70, 80 people working. Most of them were, I would say, half were officers and the other half were, the large majority were Non-Commissioned Officers, Sergeants and what have you. People that was fairly well skilled, you know what I mean, in terms of training. Anyhow, they passed the target to them. And then they allocated it out to the Batteries. In other words, they would pinpoint on the radar, passed down to you, a plane with a, and it had a signature override of some type of, I've forgotten, it was like a cross or something, but they passed that target down to you on the Battery level.

MR: So, would they specifically say, I'm going to give it to the New York Batteries?

TF: As best that I remember, yes. But also, not only did they pass it down that way and that is your target, but also, if my memory's correct, they also marked it metonymically. Do you know what I mean? We had a certain marking for our targets. Do you know what I mean?

MR: Oh, okay.

TF: They were allotted to us, on the blip on the screen. It would have like a cross on it and that would be, that was our target to fall on.

MR: Okay.

TF: And that's what they did. So his headquarters, so back to the interview, I was out there in a Launcher Platoon and I went in for the interview with, I didn't know how I was doing. I mean, he was a very nice man but very, gave me no cues. Just said I'll be back to you. The only time I gave up my hopes up was, is, near the end of the interview he asked me to stand up next to him. Ya know what I mean? I could see he was sizing me. I guess he wanted an aide that was his height or smaller, which was fine. Ya know what I mean. But I thought, hey, I must be goin' well if he's sizin' me. He must be interested. But anyhow, he chose me, but he had an unusual question. I thought my perception's the reason he hired me 'cause he was so impressed by it. Many of your Air Defense Officers of that period, the majority were what's called not "Ranger qualified."

MR: Oh, okay.

TF: I had gone to Ranger course and he commented on how impressed he was by that. So I thought he hired me because I was a Ranger. In the family it became a joke later. One clinching question in the end though, he did ask me, he said, 'Are you a bachelor?'

MR: Oh.

TF: Yes, I am. Yeah, he says 'Are you a bachelor?' This is near the [end of the] interview. Now, in the family, that became a joke later. He told me, 'cause I later found out that he had an eligible daughter that I subsequently fell in love with. It was sorta funny because I said to the family, here I thought ya know, because he made such a lot on the Ranger training, on my Ranger tab that I was wearing, I thought that that was the kicker. And I said nah, it was evident now, as I look back on it. There were other good people but I was a bachelor... So then he hired me ma' am. I mean, that's how I got from Amityville, Long Island, from Battery A to the Atlantic Highlands.

MR: What year was that?

TF: June, '63.

MR: Okay. And so you spent most of your time in the Highlands then, in the headquarters there.

TF: Yes, up until fall. And then in the fall period they moved down to Fort Hancock. In other words...

MR: Okay. They just moved the headquarters?

TF: Yes, they left. And I guess I should, for your history, ought to mention – Atlantic Highlands, the sub-site there, the small site there, was actually run by the Air Force. McGuire Air Force Base. Like they had a Lieutenant Colonel who actually commanded the site. Do you follow what I mean?

MR: Sure.

TF: So, it actually, that part belonged to the Air Force. Now Missile Master and the hill belonged to us. Ya know what I mean. But it was called, Atlantic Highlands was an actual Air Site. Do ya know what I mean? Like, the Lieutenant Colonel commanded it was an Air Force Lieutenant Colonel.

MR: Yes, I did. For a number of years the Air Force ran that with the Army, yeah. And then it went back to the Army later on.

TF: Okay, then in the fall we moved out. They moved the headquarters and left the Atlantic Highlands. Then moved down to the, um...

MR: To a barracks, an old barracks.

TF: Yes, ma'am. In fact, you got 'em, two of 'em. If you walk, if you took, you know this so well. If you, took, if you came out the back of Sue's house, the CG's (Commanding General, Building 12) quarters, there's like a walkway, it goes across the plain, goes across the Parade Ground, the cement walkway. If you walked across that walkway to the best of my knowledge, the building immediately to your left was his headquarters something where he had many of his sections. And then later, the building next to that was also converted so there were two of them. The old barracks buildings, full barracks buildings that were converted to administrative headquarters use.

MR: I'm pretty sure it was Barracks 24 and 25 were used.

TF: It sounds fam[iliar]...24. Yeah, I think you're right. I think we were, I think it was Building 24. I think you're correct but the description of where I put them is where they were. And when we moved down there, and what happened, Mary, they at this time there must have, I was a Lieutenant so I'm not really well versed in this, but there was administrative addition. They developed what's called groups. Or as they had, they, a group, it was called an Air Defense Brigade, it was at Fort Hancock. Then they had the 19th group, I believe it was called, was Atlantic Highlands. That was commanded by a Colonel Shaffer, a colonel whose house was next to the CG's (Commanding General).

MR: Okay.

TF: So, that commended by a 06, a full colonel. Then they had several battalions that were commanded by lieutenant colonels.

MR: Okay.

TF: Then it went down to the actual Nikes site themselves which were batteries. If it was a single battery, it was commanded by a captain. If it was a double battery, it was commanded by a major, like Major Cade that commanded the double battery at Fort Hancock during that period. And then they had a second group, the brigade had one group headquarters at Atlantic

Highlands. It had a second group down at what's called Pedricktown. Pedricktown, New Jersey. And that was also a colonel, a full colonel called McCauley. McCauley was his name. So your command structure was that you had the commanding general and then he had two groups under him commanded by full colonels and then under them, they each had battalions, battalions, and then they had batteries. The number of firing batteries that I could estimate during that time in the brigade was around, I think, 38-41, in that range.

MR: Wow.

TF: But what was happening, as a young officer, I noticed, I'm a regular Army Officer, I'm wanted to stay in the Army. I noticed the National Guard was taking over the Nike batteries, in other words, there was a transition. The Army was doing this, it was planned.

MR: This is part, probably Vietnam was heating up at the time.

TF: I think it even got started before, really. It was already in motion when I got there. See, I got there in '63, and they were starting to convert these National Guard Batteries. Then, what the Army was doing was dumping the Nike Hercules on the National Guard. When I say dumping, I don't mean derogatory terms.

MR: Right.

TF: 'Cause the concept was very good. And now that I'm more mature, I think, and I look back, the concept was very good because it was such a skilled business, Mary, looking at those radars and all the technical checks. Like, we had a nuclear capability at that time, you think you know that.

MR: Yeah.

TF: And, like, and you would be checked out. Everything was just detailed checks, very, I mean, each Lieutenant had a Warrant Officer under him, and thank God we did, 'cause they were so experienced. But the point being is that looking back on it, it was a great idea. Here's the reason it was a great idea: the Army people, regular Army people, Officers, came in like me. In, did their work, and then moved on. Those National Guardsmen stayed there.

MR: Right.

TF: They stayed there for years, decades I imagine. You would know because you got the long term history. But they stayed there nominally, we went up the ranks, they stayed a Captain. Like the battery commander stayed a Captain for years, you see what I mean?

MR: Right because they weren't doing it. What would happen with the National Guard though, would they be on full time active duty?

TF: In retrospect, looking back, they must have been, they had to be and they were paid in that role. So they were Guardsmen who paid in that role, full-time duty. But they didn't get

promoted. In other words, like let me think for a second. I was a First Lieutenant in '63 and in 1965, two and a half years later, I'm a Captain. You know, 'cause like you said, Vietnam speeded up the promotions.

MR: Sure.

TF: They didn't, they stayed for years. That was just, they took it as a job, but they got very good at it. I mean, as a Lieutenant when I went around with the CG, with the Commanding General, it was very clear to me when we visit those sites, they were very professional because some of them had been doing it for several years. You know what I mean? And they really, they knew their business, do you see what I mean? 'Cause they had no other distractions. Do you see what I mean? That was their business, they accepted the role, and they were going to be those roles for the rest of their near term careers.

MR: So the regular Army was still running the headquarters and everything but the National Guard was...

TF: It was a majority. In that time, in that period, they also were running the majority of the Nike Sites – of the 38 to 41 Nike sites, they were running the majority. But, it was changing.

MR: Okay.

TF: As you can see, like I was aware of the plan of the next two or three years that they were going to move more and more of these a day. It was clear to me as a Lieutenant that the day was going to come when it would basically be Guard business, do you see what I mean?

MR: Sure.

TF: I'm a young Lieutenant - I thought, 'Oh, gee, what am I going to do?' At that time they were talking about a Nike X. Nike X - it was tested at Fort Bliss, Texas, but it was never implemented. You still there, Mary?

MR: Oh, yes.

TF: Yeah. It was never implemented. I was there as a Lieutenant looking at the situation, I thought, my God, this branch is sorta dying, as far as a regular Army, it's dying.

MR: Right.

TF: And so, like the Vietnam War started heating up that year. And I wanted to go to Vietnam some sorta bad, so I asked the General if I could switch to infantry and he supported it, and our branch transferred to infantry – and then married his daughter. The week I had left in it got me the next promotion, I guess.

MR: There ya go! (Both laugh)

TF: There ya go! I hope it did, I hope it did. I hope he would've written as good as he did as if I wouldn't have been his new son-in-law, but I had to leave for that reason. You can't have a son-in-law working for the General, ya know, that would be ridiculous.

MR: Oh, so that was an immediate reason for leaving anyway?

TF: Pardon me, ma'am?

MR: Were you already scheduled to be leaving?

TF: Yes, that's right. In other words, I asked for the branch transfer at about December of that year, December or January. December of '63 or January of '64 - 1964, I'm sorry. 1964. And he wrote a nice endorsement, and I took it down to Washington and they were very kind to me. They said, 'Hey, young man, if you want it, we'll send you to Vietnam, but we're gonna send you to the 101st Airborne down in Fort Campbell (KY) to get you better trained for a year before you go over'. Which was smart because, ya know what I mean, I hadn't been functioning as an infantry man, I was an air defense man, so that's what happened. But my duties for him, Mary, were really quite simple. I ran, he had a small office, he had a stenographer, he had a driver, he had a Sergeant Major, Chesnacky was his name, wonderful old man, put years in it. And then he, Lipskin was the steno and oh, I'd forgotten the driver's name (Sexton). But he had the small staff, it was my job to basically run the small staff, and I didn't run the Sergeant Major, the Sergeant Major. He ran himself. Do ya see what I mean?

MR: Sure.

TF: Because he was a senior man and I was always very careful to make sure whatever I was doing that he knew about it. But he was a very loyal man, too. The end result was I oversaw this small office and then I traveled with him. And my duties were very simple as a young Lieutenant. I would simply, he would tell me where he wanted to go in a week. In other words, 'I wanna visit three or four Nike sites in the Eastern Pennsylvania area.' Well, then I would call the Pedricktown route and make the trips, and then I would ask the commanders to give me a history of their recent history and how they've done on recent technical inspections and a little bit about themselves. And then, we'd have to drive most of the time. Any time we flew, I would say at least half of the time we drove. We would drive to these sites and I'd brief him en route. Now, if we flew, he had a small air section. In other words, his assets were good for a brigade. He had a small air section, and they had the old glass top, the H-13 Helicopters. And he had enough of them, in other words, they must have had four or five of these things in their inventory because when we flew, it only had a pilot and it had one seat. So, he flew in the first chopper and I flew in the second chopper, we'd trail each other.

MR: Oh, so you actually take two?

TF: Oh, yes. I mean, I look back and think, you know the government. That was not cheap.

MR: No.

TF: Ya know what I mean. But yes, we did, in fact it had humorous aspects. Like, one time, we went out to visit my old battery that I had been a Lieutenant at the Battery A at Amityville and he did it. He had a sense of humor, he did a cute trick. He told the pilot that they saw the two choppers coming so he told the pilot pull off, he said, 'I want him to land first.'

MR: Oh, that's pretty funny.

TF: Yeah, it was. Oh jeez, the battalion commander and everybody was there and they all run over to my chopper and go through all the, ya know, salutes and everything. And they look in there and said "Tom, what are you doing here?" Ya know what I mean? Oh, it's just about that time. In comes chopper, the other chopper, ya know, and he had on a big smile on his face, he did it deliberately. He was cute. But it was, you shoulda seen the expression on – 'cause they just assume, and at any other place his ship always went in first and of course mine always went in behind him. But he switched the trail on me. His pilot just pulled back and told my pilot to land it. (Major) Anderson was the senior pilot at the time of age...

MR: Where do the helicopters come from? – Are they stationed at another fort?

TF: Ya know, they were stationed and this is where I struggle. As I was telling you about this, they were stationed, I believe and it's hard to explain, they were – I wanna say they had Earle Ammunition Depot.

MR: Okay.

TF: Have you ever heard of that – do you...?

MR: Yes.

TF: Okay. Earle. They were on the other side of that, in other words. They had a small site where they were not at fort. There wasn't like a spot at Fort Hancock where they were, and they were not at Atlantic Highlands. They came from that sector from the east of Earle Depot. Do you follow what I mean?

MR: They were somewhere to east of the Navy Site.

TF: Yes, ma'am. But I, they always picked us up. In other words, I never...

MR: Right, you never knew where they came from.

TF: No, it's true. They were his. They were part of brigade assets.

MR: Right.

TF: But they came out of that sector that I had defined for you and I forgotten - I think he was in the eastern part there. And one time, I think a part of it had been an Ammunition Depot or something like that. The Army still had some land there.

MR: Could it have been possibly from the site where the explosion happened after they had shut down?

TF: What was it the name of that site?

MR: Well, it has like three different names. They've called it Belford, Leonardo, and Middletown.

TF: Yes, I think it could've been from that sector. I don't want to lose my credibility because I never went there, but in that vicinity it was either at that site or at one very close to it, they would fly in and pick us up.

MR: Oh, interesting.

TF: It certainly wasn't McGuire or anything like that. Do you follow what I mean? It was...

MR: So, did you ever take any other officers with you?

TF: Just the two of us.

MR: Oh, okay.

TF: It was just the two of us. Now, normally when we get a site, the other people would be there. Like normally, at a minimum, you'd see the Battalion Commander – Lieutenant (Colonel) commander, with the, of course he would come from the battalion headquarters. And sometimes, sometimes the 06 group commander would be there. But they'd differ – like McCauley down at Pedricktown was very much a diplomat, in other words, very sharp looking beautiful wife, a very sharp looking man, very just poised and everything. He, any time the general was in his sector, he tried to be there. In other words, he was just more business.

MR: Sure.

TF: Shaffer had more an independent streak. Shaffer would be there if it made sense, but if it wasn't necessary, Shaffer did his own thing. And the CG never required that they be there.

MR: Right.

TF: The employees, ya know, just social, niceties and what-have-you. But that's how we went around, half the time in the air, and happy. The brigade had those air assets and, and that's the way we did it. Or a car – it'd be just he and I and a car with a driver. When we got to the site, all the expertise was on the site. And as an individual, he just, he was made for that business. He had a crackerjack mind for detail. He really like, he would get the radar, the IFC area, and talk to the radar people and what-have-you. He assimilated that material so well, he had a technical mind. He was trained in the army as a Comptroller. It's like a finance guy.

MR: Okay.

TF: He's an artillery man, of course. But in the Pentagon, he did a lot of budget work and everything. I don't have that detailed. Do ya know what I mean?

MR: Mmhmm.

TF: I was glad I went to the launcher platoon because I could understand it. I could see those missiles and all that. But in the radar area, it was far more technical, but he assimilated that material so quickly and the people seemed to really like it. Ya know what I mean? They really appreciated that he did was good assimilating. But that was his strength, in other words, he had a very much a strength of assimilating technical data that I noticed and I did not, that's why I had to be very careful. I was an operator, in other words I scheduled the trips as a young Lieutenant because I'm very inexperienced. I scheduled the trips, I got the backgrounds of just how they did on inspections and what have you. I got the backgrounds of the people there so when he met these National Guard Captains, for example, I loved it 'cause they usually had, many of them had 20 years of service. Not as all Nike men, but you know, doing other things in the Guard and what have you. And so they have unique stories and he liked to comment on them. When he met him, he would say, gee, how do things go on. Do you miss, eight years ago, being at Forts Swampy in New Jersey or New York Garden ya know, at McGuire Air - not McGuire, the one up by Newburgh, Steward Air Field. Do you miss being at Steward Air Field? Or something like that. And that was the nature of the dude. He was, did I do okay?

MR: Yeah. Tell me a little bit about meeting your future wife.

TF: When, it was fascinating. I meant, see, I wasn't here when you were talking to Sue.

MR: That's okay.

TF: I hope it dovetails her story.

MR: It doesn't matter.

TF: The first time I met her was I, it was, he came in as a Colonel. A Colonel promotable, so they were gonna promote him the day I arrived. Okay, and so I came in that morning and they introduced me to his family. And she was there, and said, 'Hello, Lieutenant Faley.' And she looks older, she looked liked about 24, really she was 18, I believe. She looked older, and I just assumed she was there and was movin' on - ya know, either was married, or was in college or out of college what have you. And then had little brother. She had a little brother, about 11 years old, Pete. And her mother, if you've seen pictures of her mother, the lady could've been a movie star. The lady was absolute knock-out. I couldn't believe it. I mean, I was a lieutenant - lookin' at her mother. I was just stunned. I mean, probably one of the most beautiful women I've ever seen. And that is, I mean the lady was an absolute knock-out. And as a result, that's how I met Sue. And we, I mean I worked for about two or three weeks and then one day these chop - see, these choppers would land, they would come in and drop us off. They would pick us up, they have in front of the CGs headquarters there was an open space. There's a street and a

sidewalk, and then there's the seawall. The choppers would land on the street. Okay, so ... pick us up one day. And one day we're coming in from a trip, and the two choppers were landing and she was out running around. She had real long hair and had pulled her hair down. I had, first time I hadn't seen that, had it up in a big bun. And in a sweater and a pair of slacks and really was attractive, I said, 'Oh, my God'. ... And the other thing she had going for her, the women in that place were really scarce. I mean, ladies weren't, that was, it was a beautiful place to be. But, like, in the wintertime, you knew what it was like to be alone. Okay, and so as a result, I looked at her, and I said, 'Gee, what the hell, I'll gamble, I'll go over and ask her for a date. So I ask her to go to a movie and that's how it all started. And then the, there was a comic, if I could, there's a comic story to it too, because she was in demand by the other officers, too. Like, the Provost Marshal was dating her and he was a Lieutenant and Jerry was dating her. And I started dating her at the same time. Jerry was dating her first, before I did. And when I parked my car behind the CG's headquarters on that small road behind the headquarters.

MR: Yes.

TF: The MP's came and ticket me for parking the wrong way.

MR: Ooh.

TF: And yet, I always parked it the same way he parked his car.

MR: Sure. (Both laugh).

TF: But I'm so dumb and naïve, I went to the CG and said 'Hey, boss, I don't know what the hell this means, but I parked my car just like you did but I got a ticket.' He says, 'Oh, let me see that thing.' And he saw it and called up Colonel McArdel. He was, McArdel was the guy, it was Fort Hancock until we got down there. Fort Hancock had a Lieutenant Colonel, an infantryman that commanded the Post. A very old Colonel - about 28, 29 years of service. Anyhow, I heard him call McArdle said 'Knock this stuff off.' He says, 'This doesn't make any sense or anything'. Next thing I knew, Jerry was moved from MP, he became the Club Officer. So.

MR: Oh.

TF: Oh, jeez, louse, I'll tell you what, a brutal business. I don't know why - what - they were certainly wasn't because of that incident. Do ya follow what I mean?

MR: Oh, sure.

TF: But in my mind I thought, oh gee, the MP's better watch their step but, and then I just started dating her steadily and just kept dating her steadily. And then - ya know, I fell in love with her, and then vice versa. And then when it came time, when I got those orders, I told you I branch transferred. They said go to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, 1st Airborne for a year before you go to Vietnam. I got married to her, in other words, I asked to marry.

MR: Right.

TF: And then we, and then...

MR: I have to set the pause the tape for a second,...

TF: Could we, before we talk about the wedding, may I describe the Fort Hancock experience?

MR: Sure.

TF: From a Lieutenant's point of view?

MR: I would love to hear it.

TF: It was probably the most unique assignment in the Army at that time. And the reason I say that it was like the only thing I could draw you a parallel to is that it would be like an old – when you read history of an old fort out in the west. In other words, it had a headquarters and a small troop around it and what have you. That was what Fort Hancock was like. The Lieutenants lived in the BOQ. You know where the BOQ was. Each of us had a room and we shared, on each floor we shared a bath. And oddly enough, the (park) rangers when I went there, they're what you'd call a BOQ they were still living there, some when I was there, ya know, if I leave. And that same bath on the first floor is still there being shared, I guess what have you. But that was the way we lived. Then, for entertainment, there was just out there. In other words, the group of Lieutenants, a nucleus of about seven or eight, now because at Highlands they had more. Missile Master with their little club at Highlands, you'd get more because they had more Lieutenants.

MR: Right.

TF: As I mentioned, 20 to 30 up there. But down at Hancock, we had a small number of Lieutenants and we all gravitated over to the Officer's Club. Well, a Lieutenant that lived on the second floor bought us a dog, a German Sheppard. Thunder was its name. Thunder, ... to BOQ and everybody loved it. Then it became keeping up with the other Lieutenants. They started buying dogs. And I was very competitive at the time. I thought, I'm gonna go out and buy myself a dog. So in December, I went out and a bought a white German Sheppard puppy. He was pretty big as a puppy but not that big, but thank God I took Sue with me. I was dating her and when we got the puppy I said to her, 'What do you think of this puppy?' And she said, 'Oh, I like it. I like its structure, he has got big bones.' Well, later, later in our marriage, the puppy used to sleep with me in the BOQ, in the bed, okay?

MR: Mm hmm.

TF: The puppy would stretch its legs, and one night later on an assignment at Fort Benning the puppy stretched its legs and pushed Sue outta the bed.

MR: Oh.

TF: That's when the puppy lost its bed privileges. But anyhow, we would take the Lieutenants, after we did our duty hours, we had really, particularly in the wintertime, in the months from early, early November through the end of March, we would all grab a date over to the Club and have a beer and socialize and do, and just have a lot of informal fun with each other, play cards, things like that. And our dogs, we took our dogs in there and José, the bartender, who was so kind, would let us have our dogs. And we would all be there, and the beautiful thing about it is it's like out of the Old West because if you went in there, it was just a group of young officers. You didn't see Colonels and what-have-you, unless you had a major function.

MR: Right.

TF: And we'd be there every night, drinking the beer and, or whatever drinks they're drinking, mixed drinks. And then what wasn't finished, is somebody came in on post and had a drink. A family or couple, and left and didn't finish their drinks, we kept the drinks all together in a big, he had a big, big bowl, it was a metal bowl it looked like, it wasn't silver but it had a silver finish. We kept the, we'd collect the drinks in the big bowl and then let our dogs drink the drinks. The dogs, the dogs, like my dog would get so drunk. One time he was so drunk, it tried to stand up and its feet wouldn't go under him.

MR: Awh!

TF: And another time, every time it tried to stand up, it fell over. And I leaned it up against the bar and he leaned against the bar, as long as he could put his shoulder into the bar he stood up. Sue finally said, 'This has got to stop.' She said to me, 'Now I'm not gonna date you any longer if your dog, if you're gonna make a drunk out of your dog. Ya know, 'cause you're giving your dog all this left-over booze and what-have-you.' And so, I had to. Sue made me clean it up. In other words, after that I had to sorta not share the bowl that let him have the bowl up. It was funny 'cause we'd wake up in the morning to go to work, you could tell he had a hangover... But anyhow, and the General would let me, it's again, like outta the Old West, during the working day he, remember those big trees, they'd have those big trees that are next to the headquarters building?

MR: Yes.

TF: He would let me tie my dog out there to the big tree so that's how I kept an eye on my dog. And, and it's something like outta the Old West. Now, the dog grew to be 125 pounds. Big, white, all white, German Sheppard. Beautiful animal. And like, when the General would come up to Headquarters, he'd go to go home to get his lunch but he always went over to the tree to pet the dog. In other words, they had a very good relationship. It only, only at Fort Hancock, New Jersey. I can assure you my other West Point classmates at other posts were not taking their dogs to the Officers' Club. It was such a unique experience. And of course, in the summer we used the beaches. We had our, as you know, we had the Fort Monmouth beach initially, and then they moved up to the First Army Beach. And they were very accessible, so it was a good time - in the summertime, you weren't as lonely. Am I good now, or should I just shut up and...

MR: No, I have one other question about the Officers Club. Was there actually the staff paid for by the Army, were there...

TF: Yes, indeed. They had a club, they had a Club Officer. He had been the Provost Marshal that ... he was a First Lieutenant, he was the Club Officer, and he had a paid staff under him.

MR: Were they all civilians?

TF: Yes, they were.

MR: Okay.

TF: The best of my knowledge. And it wasn't huge staff. If I had to estimate, I'd say he had two or three people. Ya know what I mean?

MR: And like so, when you guys would go over there, you'd go over in the evening, was it only open in the evening hours?

TF: That's right. In other words, I believe it open, being open in the evening and then on weekends, I think it was open on the weekends. But I don't think it was like, twelve hours a day or anything like that. I'm guessing now, as best of my memory, it opened up around 4:30 and then it shut down, there were hours. José closed – (to someone else) When'd he shut it down? About 11 at night? (Back to Mary) Around 11 at night he shut it down.

MR: He had to kick you all out? (both laugh)

TF: Yeah. Usually we were very willing to go by that time in other words. But we, it was such comradeship in other words, like with the bartender and us and what have you, it was so much fun, in other words. And Fort Benning, they could've never done, if I would've brought my dog, a German Sheppard into Fort Benning's Club, they would've given me an Article 15. I would've stayed a First Lieutenant for the rest of my career, ya know, but here we were able to do it and it worked out very beautiful.

MR: And like, when you had your wedding reception there, and I heard that your wife's parents made all the food. Did they, did you have to rent the facility for the day? Or...

TF: Yes, they did. He, I'm sure he rented the facility. In addition they did, that was amazing. But they did, the family, prepared the food and they had a, it was a huge reception. And what he did, he invited all his subordinate commanders in other words, which made it nice. I mean it had a lot of color. I mentioned, I told you about those Colonels in the group, he invited them. He had his Battalion Commanders come there and he invited them and naturally they all came.

MR: Sure.

TF: Ya know, probably protocol but it made a beautiful, beautiful ceremony. And they had like, ya know, he had rented a small band or what do you call, orchestra, or what you call band I

guess. They had music, they did make most the food themselves. And then they went out and he had a receiving line. As you come in the front door of the Club where the steps, you go up the steps, they had a receiving line right there as you come in the Club, it was right on the left. And then you went into the big, what I call the ballroom. It was a ballroom, it was a big room, it was a ballroom. And that's where they had dancing and the food and what-have-you. And...

MR: Did they, did the officers hold the swords for you guys to go through?

TF: Yes they did.

MR: At the church?

TF: They did that over at the Chapel, over at the Chapel. They didn't do a second...no, that was just, when it was time for us to go, we just all went out. Bill McKay, who was the Brigade S2. Major McKay had his car there. He was my best man and we departed in his car 'cause he hid my car on Post in his garage because if otherwise the Lieutenants got a hold of it. He said, 'Tom if we don't do it, they're gonna'... if I would've left it parked behind the BOQ's, there was no garage behind, a small parking lot, he said they're really gonna do it in.

MR: Oh, yeah! (Both laugh.)

TF: So he picked me up and took me to his garage and we pulled my car out of his garage out of.... A typical West Pointer bachelor, I bought a big Chevrolet convertible and then we went off into the sunset. That type of thing. And just good times, very good times. And such comradeship, like again my best man was the Brigade S2, intelligence officer. He's just a wonderful man, and just so fine. Later we met, he made Full Colonel and he was a marketing officer for a command that I became chief of staff of. Now, when I became chief of staff, he had gone, ya know. He didn't work for me ya now. But if he would've worked – if he would've stayed and been able to extend his service, he would've been in my command (supervision), which would've been so nice, ya know what I mean? But small world, small place.

MR: So when you two were dating...

TF: Yes.

MR: Did you do a lot of walking around the Fort, I would assume?

TF: We did a lot. Enough, in fact, we laugh about it today. We walked everywhere. And like, particularly along the dunes and what-have-you. And again, you're just sitting there and it's humorous between us two 'cause she warned me. We're sitting there on a blanket just chewing the fat, one very dark night and in comes a schooner, a big schooner with a sail on it and what-have-you. And it's got a light on the front and it looks like it's coming to the beach. And Sue said, 'Look at that! Ya know that thing's gonna come to', and I said, 'Don't worry, it's not coming to the beach.' All of a sudden, boomp, that thing hit the side, in the sand what-have-you. And a guy jumps out, and runs over and sees us and says 'I'm lost! Can you tell me how to get

to something in the New York Harbor or something like that.' I said, 'Okay here's my best shot on it though.'

MR: Wow!

TF: That was before they had the Verrazano Narrows Bridge and what-have-you.

MR: Oh, okay.

TF: Well, it was cute but we walked literally, we walked and we enjoyed, I love history and that's why it's so exciting to go back. We would go through the batteries. I remember we would walk through the big concrete batteries, ya know, the coastal batteries?

MR: Uh huh.

TF: And it was so much fun, and we would do it continue, you would think it would tired of this, but we never did. And then they still had two guns mounted on one of them, and I think they're still there.

MR: Battery Gunnison.

TF: Yes, now they weren't as good of shape as you have them now, in other words, from what Eileen showed me and from reading your documents that you send your newsletter; they're much improved in what they were.

MR: Mmm.

TF: Ya know what I mean? But it's fascinating. We, but all our walking was over on, directed on that side, over where the Batteries are.

MR: Sure.

TF: Along the beach. It wasn't as nice on the far side, when you go in where the inlet comes in between us and Earle Ammunition Depot and then the town of Highlands, what-have-you. For some reason, the ground there was real...it had these little scuffy trees and what-have-you. It would scratch your legs up and things like that, it wasn't near as nice as the beach close, as the beach close to the, we stayed over and did miles at a time in the evening, several mile walks. But it was over on the beach side, what I call the oceanside. That's what I'm struggling with to come up with, the oceanside.

MR: Right. Okay, tell me a little bit about your career after you left Fort Hancock.

TF: Oh, could I give you another piece of humor?

MR: Oh, absolutely.

TF: One of the toughest parts of the job though was, and I did this I finally got excused from this, but her father loved to fish, and they have the Coast Guard Headquarters down there at the end. They're still there I believe.

MR: Yes.

TF: (To someone else) You already told her the story? Oh, okay, you told her the story though, okay. (To Mary) Okay, anyhow, they had an old fisherman, a retired Army lad down there. Pop was what they CG called, P-o-p, but he loved to fish and the Coast Guard sometimes would be very nice and they would take him out on a cruise, ya know, on one of their patrol boats where he'd fish. Okay, well man, I went out with him, he said, 'Come out with me and we'll fish together and what-have-you.' I went out there, I was so damned seasick in other words. I'll tell you what, I found the right branch, I swear to God because I came back, well first thing, I barfed over the side of the boat continually. I mean, I was oh man, it was a good, I mean it wasn't like an ocean liner you know, you know what the patrol boats look like.

MR: Yeah.

TF: It was one of those.

MR: They're little.

TF: And, yeah, they're little. Boy, do they bounce in the water. But he (General Clapsaddle) was so happy and the Coast Guard was so happy and everything and I'm just barfing the whole day out there so we came in at night. I said, 'Hey I don't think I can do this anymore.' He said, 'Hey, you've showed me, you've demonstrated you can do it.' He said, 'You're off the hook.' That was the one part of the duty I didn't like and survived but barely. I thought I was gonna die. If they would've asked me, if they said jump in the water and you could swim in you could, but again, one of the reasons we used to walk and liked to walk along the, you probably still see it Mary, today is it at night when you get out there on the tip where First Army Beach was and what have you and further up closer to the Coast Guard site. You could look across and see Brooklyn and Coney Island.

MR: Sure.

TF: ...the lights at Coney Island. They would all be lit up and it was so beautiful at night, you know what I mean, so nice to walk, in other words. Now I'm gonna shut up and listen to you again.

MR: No, that's okay. No, it's very, tell me about your career after you left Fort Hancock.

TF: Yes, I did go to 101st Airborne division. Sue went with me, of course. And then, I went to Vietnam and I was what's called a Reconnaissance Platoon Leader in the 101st Airborne and then became a year later became a Company Commander at 173rd Airborne Brigade. And then I came back to Vietnam '72-'73...advisor to the Vietnamese Airborne Division. I served as a Lieutenant in Vietnam, a Captain and then as a Major. And they were very, they were very, as a

professional, I thought we were doing meaningful work. They were very challenging years, but I got a great deal of satisfaction out of leading troops in combat. But I actually believed that I tried as hard as I could to do what was right what have you. I was hoping I was saving lives while accomplishing a mission. I don't know, the Army would be the best judge of that. But I was very fortunate. I came back with the Silver Star, four Bronze Stars and the Army Commendation Medal with valor device in it and a cross of gallantry with gold star. And I've never, I never bled. I don't [know if] Sue told you, a sniper shot me in the wallet.

MR: Really?

TF: And, the bullet's still in the wallet. In other words

MR: You still have that wallet? (Laughs)

TF: Oh, I still have the wallet, it's funny. I still have the wallet and they did, 'cause see it's 40 years ago. It was 40 years ago, 3 months ago. And the TV stations here did a beautiful exposé on it because they blew it, with the cameras they could blow up the wall to wallets the bullet's still on the wallet. But it was fascinating when I was shot, they were all firing at us from the front. I didn't realize they had people behind me. But we go to turn in the captured weapons, and I tell them about the wallet, the Army took the wallet. And I thought, 'That's the last I'll ever see of it.' What the Army did was they gave it to Associated Press.

MR: Oh.

TF: Associated Press ran a stateside article on it, okay. Then Ripley's Believe It Or Not! got a hold of it and they ran stories and, as strange as it seems, they're comic, ya know, like comic strips. They did, and Ripley's then contacted me and wanted to, if they could have the wallet for their museum. Well, I declined that. They probably have several museums throughout the country – Ripley's Believe It Or Not!.

MR: Yeah, they do.

TF: And I declined that. I just kept it. And I'm glad I kept it because it still gives me still stuff to talk about. So, I did my tours of Vietnam interspersed between those two tours, I went to graduate school and taught then at West Point. I taught leadership and psychology at West Point. And then, after that, I did your normal infantry assignments and I served in the Pentagon as an Action Officer. As a Major in the Pentagon, all you do is stuff waste paper baskets. You follow what I mean? (Both laugh). I don't want you to believe that I was a major policy worker. I was just a working Officer, but I did one of the most, six months of the tour was very interesting because they had the West Point cheating scandal in 1978, and I was picked to go back and study the Academy for about five months as part of a small group and I did, I did enjoy that. It was very meaningful because I realized that the system had really, it I felt that it wasn't all the Cadets' fault. The system had changed so much.

MR: Mhmm.

TF: That the cadets, when I did my interviews, the deal was that I could do the interviews and they were for non attribution, in other words, the Cadet's could tell me what was coming down. And two things that I learned is that, number one: they...was not their system, that it was imposed upon them by the hierarchy to help control them, do you see what I mean?

MR: Right.

TF: So that meant that even though they had about 115 kids, they were under what, under investigation. It wasn't all their fault, in other words, the system had failed to the degree, one company I interviewed, they told me 'We elect our Honor Representative on the fact that if any of us run in trouble, he'll get us off.' Ya know, he sits on the Honor Committee.

MR: Right.

TF: It's a difference of the norms had changed. So I thought it was very important duty and really enjoyed doing it and it was very refreshing. The system had changed a bit since I had been there, but they since then they had fixed it and what-have-you. But then I went off and commanded a battalion, an infantry battalion in Germany. And then I came back and I, let's see (To someone else) Where'd I go after Germany? (To Mary) Oh yeah, I went to the Army War College after Germany. Earlier I had gone to Command General Staff College. You have to go there before you can command a battalion. I went to Command General Staff College in 1974 after I came back from Vietnam at the end of the war. And then the, from there I then, I commanded an infantry battalion in Goppingen, Germany, the 26th Infantry. Now prior to that I had infantry assignments as an Operation(s) Officer and Executive Officer. So, I was prepared for it. Trained for it. Commanded it and was then sent to the Army War College here at Carlisle and then from there I went to Fort Leavenworth became Chief of the Army Center for Leadership and that ran a center. It's the Army's Leadership and Ethics Center. It has about 40 people in it and I ran that at Fort Leavenworth. The General Staff College, and then I was asked to command what they call a ROTC Brigade at Fort Knox. And I commanded a ROTC Brigade at Fort Knox. It had units in, let's see, Tennessee, Kentucky and Michigan. And then when I was there I was asked then to become, I now had about 26 years of service, I was asked to become Chief of Staff in what they call the National ROTC Command. And I then moved to Fort Monroe, Virginia. And served for the last 4 yrs as the chief of staff of that command and retired and came here.

MR: What year did you retire in?

TF: I retired in 1992.

MR: And you had...

TF: 30 years.

MR: 30 years?

TF: Yes, ma'am.

MR: Okay, wow!

TF: I woulda got, I woulda got, it was 30 years, one month, in other words. I woulda stayed on I enjoyed it so much. I woulda, Mary, they coulda cut my pay ya know what I mean? They coulda said, 'Hey, we're only gonna pay you half of, stay on.' I woulda done it, it was fun.

MR: And along the way how many children did you have?

TF: Three.

MR: Okay.

TF: And what's nice, her father didn't see it. He didn't live long enough to see it. What was nice, from a father's standpoint, is that they all became Army Lieutenants, which was nice, in other words, they all have served active duty Army.

MR: Really?

TF: His three granddaughters all served active duty tours as Army Lieutenants. Two nurses, two nurses: a pediatric nurse and an emergency room nurse, and then an Ordnance Officer. I knew the Ordnance Officer wasn't gonna be a nurse 'cause when she went to take the medicals, Sue told me that when they went to take blood from her, she fainted.

MR: Oh, okay.

TF: Well, I figured hey, that's not gonna be a nurse. So she, thank God she wanted to be a business major so she became what's called an Ordnance Officer. In other words, they take care of the ammunition and what-have-you. And they each served their tours, and then they got out and they're civilians, of course, and they're all married with children, too.

MR: Mmhmm. Okay, well is there anything else you wanna talk about at Fort Hancock?

TF: No.

MR: Is there anything else...

TF: You've been a catalyst. God, you bled me like a turnip! In other words...

MR: Well thank you. (Laughs).

TF: I'm really serious. I hope you captured, the beauty of it is talking to you, you know so much about the Post and everything. When we described these situations, you could, really, I think you have a feel for it.

MR: Oh, absolutely.

TF: And, I think you could understand why your question is, 'Did you walk around a lot?' Yeah, we sure as hell did! (Laughs). That's about all we had to do. There wasn't anything else to do. But it was so much fun. But, if you asked me, if you asked Sue or I to give you a number of counts that we went up, not the battery that has the big guns, but one of the – what I call the largest one, I had to look at the map again. But, oh God...

MR: The longest one? Nine Gun Battery at the tip up there?

TF: Yeah, that's the, yeah. Yup, the one that's the longest.

MR: Yeah.

TF: In other words, it has about three sets of steps and what-have-you.

MR: Yeah.

TF: We must of, we must of walked up that probably 80 to 90 times, ya know, that year and you would probably say, 'Don't you ever get tired?' But see, you get up there, and in those days you could look out over the top and get a beautiful sea view.

MR: Sure.

TF: Of the ocean itself and we never tired of it, and probably we would after a year. But at least during that period, we didn't tire, but Fort Hancock was like a place out of the West. In other words, and it was, everybody was so close. We had to be close, 'cause you had to live with 'em. I mean, there's no way you could escape from them. Ya know what I mean? But it's the equivalent of taking an old fort like Fort Laramie. Laramie was too big but takin' some small Post out of the Midwest, out of the far West that you read bout in the 1880, 1890 and move it to Hancock, and by damn, that's what you got. That's what, there were things that you just, there was so much at the Post. For example, I remember one time the CG's wanted to, we wanted to, we wanted to take a walk. They have a big underground headquarters, what I call a underground, it looks like a hump of land there by the lighthouse.

MR: Oh, the former Mortar Battery that was then the Bombproof for World War II.

TF: You got it. And remember the quarters all along through there and what-have-you?

MR: Mmhmm.

TF: We went through there one time, the CG and myself and several of the Staff Officers. And the New York, maybe it's still that way, but they were into Civil Defense then. And the New York region had all types of supplies stored in there, ya know, in case there was ever a like, atomic bomb attack. This was in the early 60's.

MR: Right.

TF: Cases and cases of uh...

MR: The crackers?

TF: Of yes, of rations. You're right. Water, rations, and what have you. It was so fascinating but all stored in the, we had nothing to do with that, do you know what I mean?

MR: Did you ever have to have a drill where people would have to go in there?

TF: No, because we never, the only time we ever went in there was the CG wanted see one time what was in there.

MR: What was in there, sure.

TF: The New York authorities had to have permission from the Army early to put all the stuff in there but as you went down these corridors, they're like all tunnels. Like you said, it's the old mortar battery. These ... tunnels were all stuffed with these supplies in case there woulda been a nuclear attack. That was, see during the late '50's early '60's, that was the big threat then, ya know? That was why they had a Nike system and that type of thing.

MR: Right.

TF: Everybody was sure they were gonna come, in other words, and we were too, in other words, we thought we were the cutting edge of the Army at that time 'til Vietnam War heated up.

MR: Okay, I'm gonna stop the tape and thank you very much!

TF: Yup, hey what a pleasure. What a catalyst for a great time and I just hope it was satisfactory to you and thank you for the newsletters too, keep sending them 'cause I enjoy reading them.

MR: Okay.

TF: ...in good weather, like in October where you have the, you actually have talks now being given, ya know by the sites and what-have-you. We do intend to get some of them because it would be so good, so good to see it.

END OF INTERVIEW