Sergeant Robert Oliva: By Master Sergeant Robert H. Oliva at Marines Corps Schools Quantico, Virginia, on 21 December 1965. The subject of this interview is a fire-team leader involved in a night ambush. Subject is unclassified. Corporal Dumsick, state your name, grade, and service number.

Corporal William Dumsick: My name is William Dumsick. I’m a corporal. My service number is 2051595.

RO: What were your duty assignments while you were in Vietnam?

WD: I was a fire team leader, the last time I was stationed there.

RO: What period did you served in these billets, and where were you physically located within Vietnam during the period covered?

WD: I was stationed at Da Nang airstrip, and as time progressed we moved out farther and farther from the air base. I was stationed there from 9 March to first day of September.

RO: Discuss in detail Marine Corps tactics involved in night ambushes.

WD: The way the Marine Corps’s night ambushes are set up are sufficient with me. I think the way they are running them now is real good. I think they have a lot of value to win these type of VC that they got over there, and what we’re doing.

RO: Can you go into detail as to how a night ambush was set up?

WD: The way we set up a night ambush was the way we learned it in NTA, which proved to be effective. We set in, first off, we had three groups. We had a
blocking group, a main body, and cut-off groups. Within these groups we had small
teams, like searching teams, which would search for dead bodies. We would have
prisoner teams in case we caught any prisoners, and this was generally run on a squad
basis.

RO: Did you engage any firefights involving a night ambush over there?
WD: Yes, we did. We ran into one in particular, which proved to turn out to be
platoon-sized firefight.

RO: You were wounded over there, I understand? Can you give us any details on
the nature of your wound and how it happened?
WD: Yes, I can. On 11 July we started out on a mission. We were to set in an
ambush this night because there was supposed to have been a supply route and a well-
traveled trail that the VC were using. So on the morning of 11 July, we went on a
daylight patrol. Went around the area we were supposed to ambush, and we set in during
the daylight. That night, on the way to our ambush sites, there happened to be in the
platoon three squads fully combat-equipped with supporting arms, machine guns, and
3.5s. We were broken down to squad-size ambushes. Each squad was assigned an area
within 700 meters of the next squad. On the way to an ambush site, Third Squad hit a
mine. This happened about twenty hundred in the night of the 11 July. They had two
men dead and five men wounded. And then they started getting fire from three different
directions. This happened near the village Ly Mai, and they were caught in a minuet.

Well, as our squad was setting in, we heard the explosion from the mine, and we were
waiting for contact or some sort of word that would tell us what had happened. Within
ten minutes, we finally, after all the confusion was going on and the radio and everything,
we got the word that they needed help. So our squad leader had us withdraw from the
ambush, and we double-timed from there to where this ambush got hit at, this patrol that
was going to the ambush. When we got there, we bypassed the village, and come in from
the left. This way we could surround the VC and the village, but they were getting so
much fire that we had to pull into the village and get into a three-sixty perimeter to
protect from all different directions. When we got there, we got set in a perimeter on a
rice paddy, a little bit higher than the regular ground, sitting in on a small graveyard, and
we were pulling fire in from snipers and I think fifty-caliber machine guns. We sat there
and we tried to get the choppers in to evacuate the wounded and the dead, but there was
so much intense firing that we couldn’t bring the choppers in. So we had to call for more
reinforcements from another platoon that was out sitting in ambushes. When they got
there, which was about approximately forty-five minutes later, the firing had slowed
down a little bit from the enemy, and we were able to withdraw and to evacuate the
wounded. On the way to the ambush site or to where the people were ambushed, we
started getting sniper fire. So as we were running across an open field, I’d happen to hit
one of these punji pits that they got. It went into my foot maybe an inch-and-a-half. If I
had not caught my balance when I fell, it might have went all the way through.

RO: How many Viet Cong were involved in this firefight, Corporal Dumsick?

WD: Well, it’s hard to say, but I can give a rough estimate. I’d say more less a
platoon of VC were all involved in this. They had us penned in on three different sides.
They were using fifty-caliber and small-arms fire all around us. They did have one
automatic weapon that we know of, besides the fifty-caliber. After we pulled out, our
artillery took care of the remaining VC and they bombed this village, but when recon
went out the next morning to check up on this, all they found was blood.

RO: Thank you, Corporal Dumsick, for participating in this interview.