Floyd Jordan: This interview is being conducted with First Lt. Glenn E. Winn by
Gunnery Sgt. Floyd N. Jordan at Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia, on 11
January 1966. The subject of this interview is the initial landing of 2nd Battalion, 3rd
Marines, and problems of occupying general areas. It is unclassified. Would state your
name, grade, and service number, please?

Glenn Winn: My name is First Lt. Glenn E. Winn. Service number 085544.

FJ: Lt. Winn, what were your duty assignments while you were in Vietnam?

GW: While I was in Vietnam my duty assignments consisted of XO of a 105
direct support artillery battery, Bravo Battery, 112. I took over Headquarters Battery,
112, and for the last week that I was in Vietnam I was the CO of Foxtrot Battery, 212,
and then subsequently brought it out of Vietnam and brought the battery with 3rd
Battalion, 9th Marines back to Okinawa for its normal rotation.

FJ: What period did you actually serve in these billets and where were you
physically located within Vietnam during the period discussed?

GW: With Bravo Battery, 112, supporting 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines. I landed
with the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines on the 10th of April 1965 and stayed with Bravo
Battery until the end of April. From approximately the 1st of May until the second week
of June 1965, I was the CO of Headquarters Battery, 112, and then subsequently was the
CO of Foxtrot Battery, 212, and brought it out of Vietnam. The exact location of Bravo
Battery, we remained on the airfield at Da Nang for about four hours, from about two
o’clock in the morning, 0200 on the 11th of April, until about 0600 on the 11th of April,
and then moved off the airfield to the Da Son-Con Son area north of the main airfield
complex, about three-and-a-half to four miles. The billet that I held as CO of
Headquarters Battery, 112, I was located in the same area right next to the village of Con
Son and the same with Foxtrot Battery. This was our main battery positions and from these positions we moved out on our battery recons and for our support missions of the infantry units that we supported.

FJ: During our preliminary interview you spoke of some problems in the initial landing with the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines. Would you elaborate on these please?

GW: Yes. Our biggest problem was coordination. We had received an order while we were afloat about or approximately the 8th of April of 1965 which directed us to—first of all, the entire BLT had been on an operation in Thailand during the month of March and the first part of April. We were proceeding from Thailand back to Subic Bay in the Philippines and had received our orders to proceed and take station in the general area between Da Nang and the city of Hue, off the coast of Vietnam. Then we stood in this position for about three days and, as I said, we found out that we were actually landing in Vietnam on the 10th of April when we actually pulled into the harbor at Da Nang. Myself, I was the XO of troops on the USS Gunston Hall and the CO of troops and I were both awakened at about three o’clock in the morning by the skipper of the ship. Nobody at that time had received definite orders to go ashore or make preparations for the landing. It was strictly on our own and from what messages we could send from ship to ship that we began preparing our people, breaking out the ammunition, getting the ammunition stored aboard the vehicles, the tankers. ONTOS and LVT personnel located on the same ship with us had to go through the same thing, but we had to give them the word and it was strictly on our own. The final landing order was given to us at 0700 on the 10th of April, and the first wave hit the beach at 0800 on the 10th of April. This was a time lag of one hour, which the people had to come over with the command group from the APA that was in our convoy, get aboard our ship into the LVTs, form up the first wave, and go in and they actually hit the beach at 0800. Then, once they were ashore, two companies were heli-lifted immediately from the beach area to Hue-Phu Bai, which is forty-five miles to the north. At this time we immediately lost contact with two of our FOs and half of our liaison team, which were flown up to the Hue-Phu Bai area to establish liaison with the two companies that were sent there. So, when we actually brought our battery ashore, which started at about 1600 in the afternoon of the 10th, we had been waiting to go ashore from about six o’clock in the morning, as I said, 0600 of the 10th until 1600
that afternoon. We finally got the order to bring the artillery battery ashore. The biggest problem in this case was the boats available. There weren’t enough LCUs. There was one LCU in our LSD and there was one other stationed at Da Nang at this particular time. With an entire BLT hitting the beach, plus all the support elements, it was almost an impossibility to get all the personnel and equipment ashore as they were needed. The artillery battery—finally, I came in with the rear element, being the XO of the battery. I met my battery commander who had gone in with the first wave of the LVTs at 0800 of the 10\(^{th}\). I met him at 0100 on the morning of the 11\(^{th}\). So this was a time lag of about twenty hours. I hadn’t seen the CO of the battery or the first elements of the battery. I met him on the airfield and then was briefed at 0100 in the morning that we were leaving at 0600 to pull into initial positions north of the airfield. So actual time spent on the airfield and getting oriented to the immediate area, briefings and so on were so minute that it made no difference. We were strictly going on dead-reckoning most of the way until get into our first position.

FJ: Do you feel that this time lag in getting the battalion ashore was detrimental to the actual mission of your battery?

GW: I could answer that in two ways. I could say yes, it was detrimental because actually orienting the personnel in our battery, being their first touch with any type of combat—if I remember correctly we had four people in the entire battery who had any previous combat experience at all. Getting them oriented to the area that we were in, the environment we were in, plus trying to orient ourselves so that we wouldn’t be walking into any ambushes or anything of this nature as soon as we left the airfield. Then on the other hand I can say no, because once we put our battery ashore, the six howitzers were set up in immediate positions on the airfield in spite of the lack of the after half of the battery which contained your FDC vehicles, most of your com vehicles and so on. We could’ve fired if it had been necessary.

FJ: Did your unit operate in the TAOR while you were ashore?

GW: Yes. We operated within the TAOR in our primary battery positions, and then in support of the battalion recon from the 3\(^{rd}\) Marine Division in support of various companies which went outside of the TAOR on patrolling missions. I think it would be good to bring up at this time that every one of the companies that did leave the TAOR
was supported by a 105 howitzer battery following them as they went on patrol, not from
the primary position but moving up, staying always about 3000 meters—between 2500
and 3000 meters behind the company on the move, or the infantry were supported by one
of the eight-inch howitzers or they were supported by a platoon of 155 howitzers. So they
always had enough fire that they could call in in case of any difficulties.

FJ: From your point of view, the influence of Vietnam weather and terrain on
personnel to include physical conditioning, morale, and similar instances—what is your
opinion, sir?

GW: Well, the greatest problem that we ran into was getting the people
acclimated. We thought that after being in the Orient and most of the people in our
battery had been committed on BLTs from the time of their arrival in the Okinawa area
and the Philippines, etc.—and as I had stated earlier, we had just come from a jungle
operation in Thailand which took up most of the month of March of 1965—we thought
that we were pretty well acclimated until we actually get into the Vietnam atmosphere. It
was an atmosphere that I had never experienced before. I thought it was hotter there than
any place I’d been in the Far East. Actual temperature-wise, I think we proved that just
by taking thermometer readings. It ranged in our battery positions without a wind at noon
and most days it was 110 to 120 degrees. Of course, in the areas that we were located in
we had no shade. We had several cases of heat stroke and heat exhaustion. This again
was due to the fact that we were short on personnel. So all of these things went together.
Besides the amount of mosquitoes and centipedes that we had to contend with—
centipedes that we hit or ran into, or they ran into us, were usually about anywhere from
six to eight inches long. Several people did get bit by them. One man was paralyzed for a
period of about forty-eight hours; the entire left side of his body was paralyzed. Two
other people within our battery had the same thing happen to them, but just got violently
ill, constant vomiting and so on. This was an entirely new environment for all of us,
which we had all thought that we knew pretty well what it was going to be like, but it was
nothing like that when we got ashore.

FJ: Did you encounter any unusual problems in logistics or intelligence or
personnel, other than the initial shortage of personnel?
GW: Well, our initial shortage of personnel, we thought it was only going to be initial. Our personnel shortages actually got to a point where we had such a lack of personnel that it became a task just to keep up our direct support of the infantry units. This particular personnel status at its low ebb stayed that way until about the first week of June when we finally started to receive some replacements.

FJ: Supply of artillery ammunition or resupply of ammunition for the artillery batteries, were there any problems encountered here, sir?

GW: Yes. Actual supply of optical gear was a great problem down there because the FLSG unit that was established on the airfield at Da Nang, the actual support unit for repairing of all small optical equipment was such a small detachment that they couldn’t handle any major repairs. We thus had to have them put priorities through to get the parts flown down to us from Okinawa. This had sometimes put one and two howitzers out of action in our particular battery due to the pan sights that put our aiming circles out at various times and so on.

FJ: Do you speak French, sir?

GW: I speak a little French and this was one of the problems that we got into in Vietnam. None of us had realized that the people in our particular area around Da Nang spoke as much French as they did. The French between three officers in our battery who had a language background, we’d put together things that we wanted to say in French. This way we got by. Some of the peasant populace, the older people in the rural areas in the little villages around where we were established, our battery position, we were able to get across to them exactly what we were doing suddenly setting up a battery position in their backyard, so to say. It turned out that we were set up in a graveyard, which in Vietnam is a very critical thing. You just don’t start digging up with TD-18s and dropping your trails right into the actual cemetery itself. We almost had a little problem with the village. They came out and decided to remove all of the bodies that had been buried of their ancestors in our area. We didn’t know what—this first encounter we had with these people we had about twenty-five villagers come out carrying a great, big, long wooden box painted in bright colors. We expected that this was a mining operation or something that they were going to pull on us. We didn’t know. It was very ceremoniously done. We didn’t want to shake up the status quo we had with the people in our area, so
we had to stand there very reverently while they dug up their ancestors, removed them, and put them in their own boxes and actually took them other grave areas. Every battery that I know down there in the Da Nang area in particular ran into this problem. The eight-inch platoon that was established about 500 to 600 meters behind our position ran into this problem to a point where they actually were put under attack for five to six nights in a row by a small guerilla band of probably estimated to be five or six people. They sustained about three to four people with grenade casualties. The same thing happened to the 155 battery. We in turn then all had to form an emergency-type platoon that we could send from battery to battery, whichever one happened to be receiving fire and so on at night or being put under attack. The infantry was ahead of us, and actually was on all sides of us, and here we were behind the infantry actually sustaining these small guerilla attacks at night and the infantry would sit up on the hills surrounding us, 327, 278, and 268, and look down on us and watch little games being played in our positions by the guerillas. They were getting nothing up in their area at all.

FJ: Do you have any observations on the equipment and weapons provided your unit?

GW: Yes, I do. The equipment that we had was a very serious lack of new equipment. Our equipment was well-maintained in our battery by the personnel we had. When we landed in Vietnam it was in very good condition, but it was old. This proved itself about thirty days after we landed, actually landed in Vietnam. Two of our howitzers were dated back to Tinian and Saipan; 105 howitzers dating back that far, they had been maintained in their six-month maintenance status. They’d been inspected properly before we left Okinawa on our float phase. Everything according to our records was proper. These howitzers were dug in in a rice paddy area up around the village of Ly Mai and a rainstorm which took place that night—the rice paddy gave way and we had our entire battery sunk literally up to its axles in the paddies. We got LVTs to come over and pull us out. The LVTs managed to break off the trails on one howitzer and the other howitzer in firing about two days later actually fired once and one trail dropped right off the howitzer. It could have been very serious because there was nothing there to actually hold the howitzer forward on its recoil. It could’ve recoiled right back on somebody.
FJ: Do you have any recommendations to prevent this for future units? Do you have an opinion as to why this happened, sir?

GW: The only opinion that I would have is that the Marine Corps in their attempt of maintaining their equipment as they always have, probably one thing that was forgotten was the age in the equipment. When we were committed, I think all of us probably lacked the foresight to see that with this constant moving as we were doing with the type of terrain we were crossing, that this equipment would finally start to give way. Little parts would begin to break and so on and it was due to nothing more than to the age of the equipment. The only thing I can say was that we needed at that time newer equipment. I do know that it was replaced after I left.

FJ: Communications, as you saw it, within the artillery batteries, portable FM radios—did they satisfy small-unit communications?

GW: In some cases they did and in some cases they didn’t. The particular equipment that I’m referring to would be the PRC-9 radio. The PRC-9 radio was fine for about the first two to three weeks we were ashore and after that we ran into tremendous problems with it. Both in its range, we ran into problems of getting batteries supplied and batteries just would last maybe one or two hours of operation and then they were done.

FJ: Thank you very much, sir.