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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Harvey J. Morgan
Conducted by Floyd N. Jordan
January 12, 1966
Transcribed by Shannon Geach**

1 Floyd Jordan: This interview is being conducted with Captain Harvey J. Morgan
2 by Gunnery Sergeant Floyd N. Jordan at the Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia,
3 on 12 January 1966. The subject of this interview is the occupation of Hill 327 and
4 patrolling, and is unclassified. Would you state your name, grade, and service number
5 please, Sir?

6 Harvey J. Morgan: Captain Harvey J. Morgan, 070992.

7 FJ: What were your duty assignments while you were in Vietnam, Sir?

8 HM: I was the rifle company commander of I Company, 3rd battalion, 9th
9 Marines.

10 FJ: What period did you serve in these billets and where were you physically
11 located within Vietnam during the period covered, Sir?

12 HM: I served in this capacity from 8 March until 16 June and we were physically
13 located in the Da Nang area of South Vietnam.

14 FJ: Your unit came in and landed south of Da Nang or near Da Nang to occupy
15 Hill 327. Is that correct, Sir?

16 HM: That's correct. Our initial landing was made on the 8th of March. The
17 entire battalion proceeded to the Da Nang airfield that day. Stayed on the airfield that
18 night and on the 9th of March, the next day I Company was ordered to accompany the
19 engineers to the base of Hill 327 so that the engineers could commence work on the road

1 that led to the top of Hill 327, so that the Hawks could be hauled to the top and then
2 placed atop Hill 327.

3 FJ: Would you discuss the movement of the Hawk missiles to the top pf Hill 327
4 and the part that your company played in this movement, Sir?

5 HM: Yes. On the 10th of March the company was order to proceed to the top of
6 Hill 327. At the same time the remainder of the battalion left the airfield and moved to
7 the base of Hill 327. Another company occupied a hill mass known as 268, while my
8 company occupied 327. The engineers at this time proceeded with their work to the top
9 and were able to push through the already-existing road by 11 March and the worked
10 continued for a period of approximately ten days before the Hawk missiles could be
11 brought to the top of the hill. My company relieved two ARVN Ranger platoons who
12 occupied the hill at the time, that is to say, around 10 March.

13 FJ: When your company had left Hill 327, it was involved or it did execute the
14 patrol actions in the area west of Da Nang. Would you relate the purpose of the patrol
15 and its results from your company's viewpoint, Sir?

16 HM: Yes, 3/9 was relieved from the 327 Hill complex on the 8th of April by 1st
17 Battalion, 3rd Marines. At that time the battalion moved back down to the Da Nang
18 airfield itself and assumed the responsibility for the defense of the airfield. At this time
19 the defense required three companies be on the perimeter. This left one company to
20 patrol in the Da Nang TAOR. My company participated in one such five-day patrol, in
21 an area approximately fifteen kilometers to the west of Da Nang. The purpose of these
22 patrols was an attempt to make contact with the Vietcong or at least to keep them off
23 balance and keep them out of our TAOR. This was one of the means of the brigade and
24 force commanders used in maintaining control of their TAORs.

25 FJ: Would you discuss briefly the action of your patrol during this five days
26 there? Was their any contact made by your patrol? What was the status of the civilian
27 population, or did you even see any of them, Sir?

28 HM: The patrol took place in the area roughly a valley between the Hill 393 and
29 the extremely high hills, which commenced the beginning of the mountain range between
30 Vietnam and Laos. We had no contact with the Vietcong as such. However, the point of
31 the column ran across two booby-trapped hand grenades one of which was discovered

1 prior to being detonated. The other, which was not discovered, and caused three minor
2 casualties. One point of interest here is that we determined that the Vietcong obviously
3 had some sort of code system worked out whereby they would either bend a twig across a
4 path or put a small mound of dirt on the path itself approximately ten paces on either side
5 of this booby trapped hand grenade, obviously to warn other Vietcong or perhaps the
6 civilian populace. We, of course, determined this after the second one had gone off. This
7 is an assumption on my part. But at any rate, the fact was reported to our battalion S-2. I
8 think the information disseminated to the remainder of the main expeditionary force. The
9 civilian populace were not necessarily unfriendly but they were sort of non-committal.
10 They would, however, after we made the initial move to be friendly reciprocate by being
11 friendly towards us. The majority of the contact that we had with the local populace was
12 in the area of assisting them medically. We had a doctor along with us. He and the
13 corpsman would go with us into the various villages and they would give medical
14 treatment within their capabilities to whomsoever came to request it. We found that the
15 great majority of the villagers would turn out for this particular assistance.

16 FJ: There was a significant civic action undertaken by your company. Would
17 you comment on this and its impact on your company's relations with the civilian
18 populace, Sir?

19 HM: In one particular village that we patrolled through there was an elderly lady
20 who died while the company was occupying and searching that particular village. When
21 the daughter of the lady was asked if any assistance could be rendered by we, the
22 Marines, she said yes she would like some assistance in getting wood to build a casket to
23 bury her mother in, and also to get some sort of white cloth to wrap her mother in. I
24 radioed back to battalion and requested that the lumber be sent out for this purpose and
25 also requested that two sheets be sent along for this white cloth that the daughter wanted.
26 This was forthcoming shortly from battalion. We assisted the local people in the
27 construction of this casket. Also, we were there to assist in the actual burial, and shortly
28 thereafter left that particular village. Of course, that particular village turned out en
29 masse to express their thanks. It was obvious to me and all the other Americans around
30 that they were very thankful. It appeared that the minor action in the civic action field
31 had gained quite a few friends for the U.S. government. It was also noticeable the

1 following day because every village that we would go through, all the villagers would
2 turn out to also express their thanks for the kindness that we had shown to the villagers
3 by assisting them in burying the elderly lady. So the very minor civic action deed had a
4 very quick completion time and it had very obvious effects, as far as I was concerned.

5 FJ: Captain Morgan, you've covered the occupation of Hill 327, a specific patrol
6 action undertaken by your unit. This has shown us an especially in the Civic Action
7 section that quick and proper civic action probably carries more weight than a lot of
8 paper would have, which would not show instantaneous results. Would you make any
9 recommendation to a successor or to someone who was going over in a capacity similar
10 to yours about civic actions, of what he could do to foster better relations between his
11 unit and the civilian populace, Sir?

12 HM: Yes, I think that civic action is a very obvious requirement and, further, that
13 the more civic action there is, the better the relationship is going to be between the local
14 populace who is basically the target in this type of war, and the American soldiers or
15 Marines, for that matter. There are several established civic action functions that are
16 directed by our headquarters. However, everybody—the individual private or company
17 commander, platoon commander whoever it happens to be—can do his share toward
18 completing a successful Civic Action Program simply by being alert for any area or
19 anything that he or his men might be able to do on the spot that would have instant
20 completion time or very short completion time, but yet would have noticeable results that
21 the local populace can see. There are hundreds of things that can be done. All it takes is
22 imagination on the part of the individual American, as far as I can see.

23 FJ: You expressed in our preliminary discussion the delay in tripping or throwing
24 of flares and detonation was a handicap. Would you comment, Sir?

25 HM: Yes, I considered this to be a handicap especially in a jungle warfare-type
26 situation. If you have a minor delay, for example on a hand thrown illumination device
27 you have the initial pop of the detonator and then perhaps a two or three second delay
28 before the actual illumination is forthcoming. This gives the Vietcong or any enemy time
29 to disperse into the undergrowth. It gives him a chance to hide himself. In a defensive
30 situation, or in ambushes for that matter, it is my opinion that this country needs some
31 sort of illuminating device other than a battery-powered flashlight or searchlight, or

1 something of this nature. They need something that the individual can carry and he can
2 throw and the moment that it leaves his hand and travels a certain distance it should have
3 an instant illumination capability. Now this, to me, should have the capability of
4 illuminating the moment that you hear the initial pop of the spoon flying off. To me, this
5 would greatly facilitate combat at night in a jungle-type terrain.

6 FJ: Thank you very much, Sir.