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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Roger Davis
Conducted by Floyd N. Jordan
January 11, 1966
Transcribed by Laura Darden**

1 Floyd Jordan: This interview is being conducted with First Lieutenant Roger E.
2 Davis by Gunnery Sergeant Floyd N. Jordan at Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia
3 on 11 January, 1966. The subject of this interview is Civic Actions conducted by tank
4 battalion and is unclassified. Would you please state your name, grade, and service
5 number?

6 Roger Davis: Roger E. Davis, 1st lieutenant, 087759.

7 FJ: Lieutenant Davis, what were your duty assignments while you were in
8 Vietnam?

9 RD: I was a platoon commander, and an intelligence officer/civic affairs officer.

10 FJ: What period did you serve in these billets?

11 RD: I served from May to June as a platoon commander and from June until
12 November as two in civil affairs officer.

13 FJ: 1965, Sir?

14 RD: 1965.

15 FJ: Where were you physically located within Vietnam during this period?

16 RD: For two months, I was located in the Hue-Phu Bai area and for four months
17 in the Da Nang area.

1 FJ: The civic action measures that were used by the tank battalion as you were
2 the civic affairs officer in conjunction with being the S2, would you discuss some of the
3 civic action measures that were actually employed or used by the tank battalion?

4 RD: We started out on the first day, the battalion established its CP in the Da
5 Nang area with Civil Affairs by giving medical aid to some local inhabitants. Some
6 people we had to move to make way for the command post and they came to us with
7 children or one child who had had a grenade wound that hadn't been tended for awhile and
8 this more or less started our Civil Affairs Program. We had sort of eased into it by daily
9 medical aid, light medical aid to the surrounding people around the command post area.
10 This aid increased as we got a battalion doctor with us. Not only did the aid increase, but
11 also the area with which we operated increased. We took in more hamlets than we had
12 previously. After our medical effort, we tried a little different approach by attempting to
13 help the people around our area with their school. We got them two blackboards. When
14 I left, we were working on putting a cement floor into their school and we were
15 attempting to get some tin for their roof. We also procured food from the Catholic
16 Release Society and distributed it in the area. We put in requests to USOM, that's the
17 United States Overseas Mission, to dig two wells for the hamlet that was in our area and
18 we put in requisitions for cement, school supplies, and other various things that went with
19 the division Civil Affairs Program.

20 FJ: How much actual contact with USOM representatives did you have as a Civic
21 Affairs Officer, Sir?

22 RD: Specifically, I had about three days contact with them at a seminar where
23 they gave us quite a bit of advice; this was USOM. Now, the USIS or as it is now,
24 JUSPAO agent, I had contact with four or five times getting reading materials for the
25 Vietnamese people that were around our area there getting school books and just plain
26 entertainment items for them.

27 FJ: Are you feeling that there was a beneficial contact made with the USOM or
28 USIS representatives, benefit that you actually saw the results of, Sir?

29 RD: We saw the results of the USIS more than USOM, but then you have to
30 realize that USOM is engaged with the national government, too, and anything they do
31 has to be approved through Saigon and through more channels than the USIS does. USIS

1 has more on-hand material than USOM does, but it was beneficial. They have quite an
2 organization to help out the people over there. They have quite a source of supply.

3 FJ: How large an area was the tank battalion itself involved in Civic Action? Just
4 would you give an estimate of how large an area you were directly involved with?

5 RD: Well, to begin with, we operated in our immediate vicinity around our
6 immediate perimeter. There were two hamlets; one very extensive, one of them, one
7 smaller one that we took care of. As I said earlier, we went along and we got a doctor
8 who could do more work for us. We increased our radius until we operated sometimes
9 on the eastern side of the Da Nang River. I think we encompassed about five hamlets,
10 when I left the area. We were operating in about five different hamlets.

11 FJ: Is there any advice or recommendations that you'd have for anyone who
12 would be going over who might become a Civic Affairs officer that you think would
13 benefit him?

14 RD: One thing we have to remember as far as the Civil Affairs Program goes in
15 Vietnam is the fact that the whole thing is geared to get the Vietnamese government
16 working; to get their machinery going as far as their rural population goes. So, if we go
17 over there and do all this ourselves, take it out of the pockets of the Marine Corps and
18 have the Marines do all the work and scrounge up our own gear to get the Vietnamese
19 people, we have, in effect, accomplished nothing. Our basic purpose is to get the
20 government to get out into the countryside and work with these people and have them do
21 the jobs. We send over I don't know how many millions of dollars a year in aid to
22 Vietnam, and it's this equipment and supplies that have to be funneled out of the Saigon
23 red tape area and into the countryside. This is the biggest problem now. So anything that
24 has to be done as far as the people are concerned should be done on a Vietnamese
25 government level with the corresponding advisory officer taking a hand in the affair. But
26 it has to be done through the Vietnamese government, not on our own. We have to make
27 them work, not us.

28 FJ: A portion of the period covered here, you are a platoon commander within the
29 tank battalion or tank company. Is that correct sir?

30 RD: Yes I was.

1 FJ: Would you have any personal contact or knowledge of the use of the track
2 vehicles themselves, Sir?

3 RD: Yes, rather extensive. As a platoon commander in the Hue-Phu Bai area, we
4 did quite a bit of operating. Vietnam isn't exactly all rice paddy and swamp as some
5 people tend to think. There is good operating terrain in the Hue-Phu Bai area and also in
6 the Da Nang area if you go out and look for it. Well, you don't have to look for it in
7 certain places. Of course, it depends on what you call operating terrain.

8 FJ: Well, generally speaking, the traffic ability of the terrain at least in the Phu
9 Bang area is suitable for tank employment.

10 RD: It's suitable, yes. There are a few little difficulties you have to overcome,
11 but it's better than most places out in the Far East.

12 FJ: Were there any logistic problems encountered within the tank platoon such as
13 maintenance or availability of repair parts?

14 RD: Well, of course, we carry our own maintenance support in the form of a tank
15 mechanic, but we did have trouble getting spare parts. We were getting different usage in
16 Vietnam than we had prior to the time going down there. Certain items that would get
17 blown away by mines were not highly stocked because it'd never happened before and it
18 was hard to get them. Certain other things were getting more wear than they normally
19 got because of the extensive operations we did. For example, sprockets; in this type of
20 thing, we had a hard time getting. It was pretty tough getting replacement parts. I don't
21 think it was due to the fact they didn't have them, I think, it was due to the shipping tie
22 up.

23 FJ: Do you feel it is an abnormal amount of time lost in with the waiting for spare
24 parts?

25 RD: Well, we didn't exactly wait. We jury-rigged one possible and we operated
26 the vehicle if we could. We would deadline it if had to be, but under different situations,
27 you do different things.

28 FJ: Well, did you find that there were any special types of training that was
29 required by your crewmen, or was it basic teachings of the Marine Corps as far as track
30 vehicle crewmen considered? Is this still sound or were there specific areas which you
31 had to make shift or add to?

1 RD: No, the training they had was extremely sufficient. One small item of
2 training that might be included would be a sort of passive mine defense where you took
3 precautions in driving and did a little better scouting job of the roads before going
4 through a certain area. But this would be about the only thing we were, well, I don't want
5 to say deficient; the only thing that we could use maybe a little more training than we
6 have had.

7 FJ: Thank you very much, Sir.