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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Charles Bryant
Conducted by E.J Godfrey
January 26, 1966
Transcribed by Laura Darden**

1 E.J Godfrid: This is a Vietnam interview tape of Sergeant Charles L. Bryant,
2 1614345, United States Marine Corps. He's being interviewed by Major E.J. Godfrey at
3 Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Paris Island, South Carolina on the 26th of January 1966.
4 The subject of this tape will deal primarily with Sergeant Bryant's experiences as a
5 machinegun squad leader in the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines in the Chu Lai area between 18
6 May and 20 July, 1965. This tape is unclassified. Sergeant Bryant, would you briefly
7 summarize where you were and when you got to Vietnam and some of what your duties
8 were?

9 Charles Bryant: Yes, sir. I was in the Chu Lai area of Vietnam with the 3rd
10 Battalion, 3rd Marines, Lima Company. We got there on 18 May.

11 EG: What did you do when your platoon did come in? Was this an opposed land
12 or was this just a—?

13 CB: No sir, when our company landed—

14 EG: Should say a tactical landing?

15 CB: Well, it was planned to be a tactical landing, but when we landed it was—
16 advanced parties had already set up and we more or less just came ashore un-tactically.

17 EG: Administratively.

18 CB: Yes, sir.

19 EG: What did your platoon do then?

1 CB: Well, at that time, our whole company was moved through the—what was
2 already set up then as a battalion perimeter—with what had landed on the advanced
3 party. We moved on through and set up a perimeter forward of all that. We were set in
4 those defensive areas there to guard the Chu Lai Bay.

5 EG: Which sector of the airbase were you covering? Do you recall?

6 CB: I wasn't sure the exact sector, but we were tied in with 4th Marines on our
7 right and part of 4th Marines on our left, also. But as far as the area, I don't know the
8 exact area.

9 EG: You were a machinegun squad leader. How were your machine guns
10 employed in your airbase defense?

11 CB: Most of the time, the guns were employed and were split. They hardly ever
12 were employed as a squad.

13 EG: Why was this?

14 CB: The open terrain and each company and each platoon has such a wide front
15 to cover.

16 (Technical difficulties, conversation unintelligible)

17 CB: That was the most fire we ever received from the VC.

18 EG: How about offensive operations? Did you ever take your squad into any
19 offensive type action?

20 CB: On offensive operations, we went what was known in the Chu Lai area as
21 the peninsula and made search-and-destroy operations.

22 EG: Where was this peninsula with relation to Chu Lai?

23 CB: As far as direction—North, South, East, and West—I wouldn't know
24 exactly. But it's the only peninsula that stands out there.

25 EG: It was between Chu Lai and the sea or?

26 CB: Well, in the river there. I can't even remember the name of the river, but the
27 peninsula is just south from the mouth of the river and the river's right next to Chu Lai
28 Bay. Then the peninsula comes out there and that's mostly where we had our operations
29 while I was over there, was right there on that peninsula. When we went over there, we
30 went over for search-and-destroy. Usually, one company out of a battalion is designated
31 as a blocking force and the other companies would make a sweep through the whole area.

1 EG: You just continually were sweeping this one peninsula?

2 CB: Yes, sir. Now, we went over this peninsula about three times while I was
3 there and actually the battalions (Technical Difficulty) and each night there had to be a
4 company over there and they'd spent a night and a day, and then another company
5 relieved them, and just more or less continually swept the place.

6 EG: How were your machineguns employment in these search-and-destroy
7 operations?

8 CB: Well, during a search-and-destroy, most of the time our machine gun, unless
9 our company was designated as a blocking force, most of the time our guns would be
10 brought up on the line with the riflemen to—well, I thought it was a change from the A-4
11 from having to bring up the guns up, the guns were right there on the line as we needed
12 them. That was the beauty of the M-60s (Technical Difficulty) One-hundred fifty rounds
13 and you can fire it.

14 EG: Did you ever actually have to fire it?

15 CB: No, sir, I never did. Most of the time, depending on how far we would, while
16 we had time to cross on down...(Technical Difficulty)

17 EG: Did you frequently run into situations where the machinegun had to be
18 employed?

19 CB: Yes, sir. I'd say, well, one time when the gun really came in handy, we had
20 to fire on some huts and the machinegun being what it is put out more firepower...

21 (Technical Difficulty)

22 EG: You mentioned the 3-5s. Were you able to observe how they were being
23 used like they were?

24 CB: In the defensive area, they were used as almost up on the line; they weren't
25 with the CP group at all. They were, say, twenty to thirty yards back behind the line, but
26 usually, you're in a position where they could observe or they'd be on the high ground
27 and be able to fire from that area also. What it broke down to was they were firing over
28 our heads, in a way of speaking.

29 EG: How about in the offensive-type operations?

30 CB: Well, when we went on a search-and-destroy, they were usually with the CP
31 group or behind a squad and they would pull up, call up, and use when they were needed.

1 EG: What were they being used for?

2 CB: Well, in that one case when our guns were firing on these huts, they were
3 used to just outright destroy the huts.

4 EG: Is this primarily what they were used for mainly in the villages?

5 CB: Yes, sir, more or less. Each one of those huts over there's got one of those
6 little holes in it. A 3-5 has a better shot than say—

7 EG: You say one of those little holes. What do you mean by that?

8 CB: Well, each house has got a pit in it there, or each house that I—well, not
9 every house, but most of your houses got some kind of hole either inside it or right
10 outside it that these people, they'd been fighting for so long, I guess they just a dug a hole
11 in case bombs came some day and also the VC is always there and they're always
12 digging defensive positions, you might say.

13 EG: Is it a foxhole or a tunnel or what are you—?

14 CB: Well, it looked like a cellar, almost, and (unintelligible) The day that we
15 were being fired upon where we used our machineguns and our rocket launchers, the
16 holes those people were using were just like a spider trap inside their houses. They set up
17 to fire and go back down in their hole and you start firing at them. After the 3-5 came up,
18 the firing did stop. I think 3-5s more or less did what the machinegun probably couldn't
19 do. We were putting them down in the hole, but I mentioned 3-5—

20 EG: When you firing in the villages with your machineguns, what kind of ammo
21 were you using? Were using any tracers?

22 CB: No, sir. We didn't use tracers that I remember. I don't think we did.

23 EG: I'm thinking more to possibly set the huts on fire.

24 CB: Set them on fire. Yes, our ammo did have that. I think every fifth round was
25 a trace round. Because we'd fire them a few times at night. It did. It had the regular
26 spaces for the tracers to go in machinegun ammo.

27 EG: How did you find the M-60 machinegun? From what you said before, I
28 gathered that you did have experience with the A-4?

29 CB: Well, yes, sir.

30 EG: How was the M-60 compared to them?

1 CB: In comparison with the A-4, I'd say the M-60 was a much better machinegun
2 in some of its effects. Then with your A-4, your TO, as far as your TO goes, the TO was
3 better with the A-4 than with the M-60. With the M-60, you don't have as many men in a
4 machinegun squad as you do that you used to have with a machinegun section and in
5 comparison they both do the same job. Subsequently, this makes the ammo problem
6 harder on the M-60 squad than it did on the A-4.

7 EG: So the gun itself you found to be very effective?

8 CB: Yes, sir. Real good.

9 EG: How did you—did you find you were able to haul the ammo you needed?
10 Did you need help?

11 CB: We needed help while I was over there. We had a rifleman in a rifle platoon
12 help carrying our ammo because we used to have to carry some much ammo on one of
13 those operations that they riflemen would have to help you.

14 EG: I know another change that came about with the weapon was the, what used
15 to be the assistant gunner, formally assistant. Actually now he's carrying a rifle. How did
16 you find this?

17 CB: Well, we talked about that over there and we thought that the man that used
18 to carry the pistol on the A-gunner, he should come back the way it was with the A-4.

19 EG: Why is this?

20 CB: That it would give up more hands they could work with. Another man could
21 help carry more equipment. With the M-60 it seems like it got more gun equipment to
22 carry than you did with the A-4 and you don't need any more men than we had with the
23 A-4, there'd be just as many. If he had a pistol whereas he has a rifle, then he could help
24 carry ammo a whole lot more.

25 EG: How about the temperature and the weather? How does it seem to affect
26 your weapon?

27 CB: Well, as far as affecting the weapon, it didn't bother it at all. The weather
28 didn't. In the area where I was at, Chu Lai, it was real sandy and the sand, we used to
29 have to clean the weapons all the time, keeping them sand free.

30 EG: Continually cleaning?

1 CB: Yes, sir. Of course, they'll fire with the sand on them, but then again, you
2 get too much and it's going to stop firing.

3 EG: Sergeant Bryant, is there any specific actions or any other specific
4 experiences you'd like to throw in here for this interview?

5 CB: No, sir, none that I know of. We weren't doing any more there than
6 anybody else was doing.

7 EG: Thank you very much, Sergeant Bryant.

8 CB: Yes, sir.