**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Connor Knowles**

**Date: 1/16/2020**

**Participant #: 147**

Interviewer (Code in blue): CDR Andrew Ledford

Participant (Code in black): #147

Reviewed by Jesse Hall August 2020

Patti Miles: I listened to the recording and finished off the last three questions for this guy on 12 July 2020.

**Interview Guide**

**CDR: Alright so I'm with um candidate number 147 and originally you were 136 right?**

**147: Um yes so I just I opted out initially and then they just brought me into it with a different number.**

**CDR: Okay.**

**147: Um I don’t think the 136 really means anything.**

**CDR: Okay. So you’re 147 now and you’re good with me recording this?**

**147: Uh huh**

**CDR: Okay. So it is 5 December and the time is 2:16 PM. This is Andrew Ledford. And basically what we’re going to do is we’re going to ask you some questions about um your background a little bit just to get an idea like what makes you tick and what got you into this chair right here. So first off, some easy ones uh...**

**Siblings do you have any siblings?**

**147: I’ve got two older sisters**

**CDR: two older sisters [4 second pause] and how much older are they?**

**147: uh one is 13 months and the other is 4 years.**

**CDR: and 4 years...older. So you’re the youngest**

**147: Im the youngest**

**CDR: and parents? Both parents raised you guys?**

**147: uh huh**

**CDR: So what about your um life experiences overall that shaped you like were there any major experiences kind of growing up in your life that really kind of made you who you are**

**147: um**

**CDR: like big ones**

**147: yeah um so I think doing a lot of traveling like church groups um I was able to go to Mexico um on like 9 or 10 different mission trips um just being able to see kind of people at their worst and best all at the same time. Um kind of the worst of conditions uh but still kind of the best of people um was really formative to me and just uh giving -giving people a lot of value as far as that goes.**

**CDR: So you did this uh with your family?**

**147: Uh a little bit yeah. Mostly uh mostly with the church.**

**CDR: And what do you think about your experiences like of those experiences how do you feel like that helped you and shaped you.**

**147: Umm so definitely like good w-work ethic uh just it’s really motivating to-to work hard on behalf of someone else um as opposed to just for yourself because obviously we weren’t getting any benefit or any gain whenever we went down there but still long hard hours of swinging a hammer and uh moving dirt around and stuff um definitely-definitely learning that work ethic on behalf of someone other than yourself.**

**CDR: What do you think about your personality in particular? Like what are the things that are particular to your personality that you think probably helped you get through buds?**

**147: Um well i'm probably more of like a thinker not really uh a talker as much so just a lot of listening and doing um and I think kind of keeping a cool objective thinking head um rather than um rather than getting emotional I guess.**

**CDR: Good. Now going to your- back to your childhood a little bit more um growing up how would you say your parents disciplined you like would there be timeouts, they use spankings, they withhold toys.**

**147: Yeah so definitely um spankings. My dad had a wooden spoon he would carry around in his back pocket on like the bad days uh so most days you-you just uh kept your head down but uh. There was one-One wooden spoon was worse than the other like it had a chip out of the front of it, so it’d really sting**

**CDR: One of the wooden spoons?**

**147: mm-hm, you knew-you knew you were in trouble um when he broke that one out**

**CDR: So would you kind of your parenting style would you say they were pretty strict….or just average?**

**147: Uhh yes and no I would say probably average yeah they still gave us a lot of kind of leeway and uh you know pretty understanding with us.**

**CDR: Um, what about your teenage years, like did you guys move around a lot, were you from a small town, big town. What does that look like?**

**147: So, small town uh I was actually homeschooled for like 4th grade and I went to a private school through like 8th grade um and then 8th grade on went to public school.**

**CDR: Um so homeschooled up to 4th grade**

**147: mm-hm**

**CDR: and then-**

**147: Did private school for middle school, yep**

**CDR: up to like 9th or 8th grade. And then public school?**

**147: still a small public school**

**CDR: Um and what about sports and activities like what'd you do**

**147: Yeah so I played baseball and basketball in highschool um which was a lot of fun. Learned a lot of mental toughness from my highschool basketball coach um he was really big on teaching mindset and um how to go about things uh professionally which was good. Did a lot of bow hunting as well.**

**CDR: What would you uh, what would you hunt for mostly?**

**147: Mostly white tail**

**CDR: Okay. [5 second pause] So in your last 5 experiences or last 5 years where would you say what were your experiences in the last 5 years. Did you go highschool boot camp here? Or did you-**

**147: So I went to college um got my degree**

**CDR: So highschool to college. What kind of college was it?**

**147: So I went to a little school called college of the ozarks actually  
That actually had a big impact**

**CDR: What was it?**

**147: College of the ozarks. Actually [unintelligible name] that you were just talking to, we both went to the same school at the same time. Um, so that had a big part in my development. Just like the work ethic and um you know staying out late and um just working in a kitchen because you have to do pay for school so that was really big**

**CDR: So you worked at the kitchen while you were going to school?**

**147: Yes yeah so its a work college you work for your tuition so you work 15 hours a week on campus.**

**CDR: oh wow okay**

**147: and then two 40 hour work weeks a semesters um**

**CDR: so what is that, you work how many 15 hours per week?**

**147: yep**

**CDR: per week to pay for tuition**

**147: uh huh so you go to school for free and you just pay for room and board. Its a really good school um it also got a patriotic travel program where um I got to go travel to vietnam with 12 vietnam veters and 12 students yeah so we toured vietnam and heard their stories and its a really cool program We got really close with a man who um was a LRRP - a long range reconnaissance patrol. Um**

**CDR: Yeah. That is cool and he was on the**

**147: He was on the trip so we got to stand in the jungle where he stood and hear his stories just incredibly healing for them and incredibly educational for us. Um so just really moving we stood in the hanoi hilton with two different POWS who were there for six years [dan quinn] idk if you've heard that name**

**CDR:**

**147: really powerful trip**

**CDR:how long was that trip**

**147: 12 days. That was my junior year**

**CDR: Wow that is amazing. How would you consider yourself with impulsiveness like uh do you have tattoos? Um do you um would you consider yourself an impulsive person or not really**

**147: probably not. More of a saver. Um-**

**CDR: What would you say motivates you on a daily basis?**

**147: Um, I don't know some days it's different um a lot of times it's just the the desire to perform well kind of that desire to be good at whatever it is that I'm doing um also feel strongly that um the Lord has called me to this he's been really good to me and brought me to this point Um a lot of my motivation is the um kind of bring him into this environment with me.**

**CDR: yeah. So you'd say your faith is a big part of it?**

**147: Yea for sure. Big part of that**

**CDR: what would say was the most challenging component of BUDS like overall areas?**

**147: Um so the water I kind of struggled in, being a good ol missouri boy um but um so that's been tough to I guess the water has brought me to a place where I've had to deal with failure um in like a really like you’ve failed kind of way. Um which is which is good it's been good for me um**

**CDR: so its brought you to a place to deal with failure**

**147: for sure**

**CDR: how so**

**147: well I failed so I failed my first attempt at the CSO tread first phase um**

**CDR: explain the CSO**

**147: so its uh its supposed to simulate like the uh rotor wash on the uh like on a helicopter basically you're just in the water full cammies and a charged mask with your entire class so the class is being looped around by a boat crew. It's designed to be chaotic and you just have to stay cool and keep water in your mask and keep your head above water um and think about what you're doing. [The bee hive].**

**CDR: oh wait is this um this isn't the beehive is it?**

**147: It is the beehive yeah its been called the beehive the CSO combat swimmer orientation**

**CDR: and so you got rolled**

**147: I got rolled for that**

**CDR: and you got rolled from what class?**

**147: from 336 into 337. [pause] And then I got rolled again for OC8 from 337 to 338**

**CDR: rolled from 337 to 338 … for what?**

**147: OC8**

**CDR: OC8 what is that? [open circuit 8]**

**147: thats in second phase its open circuit 8 its the one where you go in with twin eighties and they take your air**

**CDR: yeah, sharking**

**147: I-I was actually given, during my like boards for being rolled for OC8 I was given a really rare opportunity where I was brought in for my CO board and sat down with commander [interpreted as CMDR Meringues] he said um I'm gonna have to drop you cus its your second water failure, however you know [the CMDR said] I’d like you to come back, okay? So I was dropped from the program, went downstairs, was talking to um the other guys that had boards and they called me back up called me back in and CO said I changed my mind on you based on my gut feeling, I can't really explain it but I think you should stay, so here I am in 338 instead of the fleet. So thats been a huge motivating factor since then to just be um doing the absolute best that I can everyday its like a huge blessing just to just to even be here so I’m super thankful uh that probably should have gone in my [unknown] motivation but um it's definitely motivating to to have seen the other side and be back.**

**CDR: yeah cus they had they dropped you**

**147: yeah I was dropped, for about 45 minutes**

**CDR: oh gosh**

**Unknown: mind if I borrow these paper towels right quick?**

**CDR: yeah. [pause] Got it. So what...so all the water stuff going ya know, what kind of pushed you through what helped you get through all the water stuff get through all the rolling**

**147: yeah i'm just a lot of prayer um just staying centered on that um-um family being connected with them um kinda their encouragement**

**CDR: so you talked to them often?**

**147: yeah, for sure**

**CDR: how often do you think?**

**147: uh probably like once a week**

**CDR: Were there practices any kind of practice that you would do on a daily basis like almost daily that helped you**

**147: yeah for sure um so once I got rolled for the CSO ya know I went every day to the pool and just charged my mask and went to the bottom charged my mask and swam laps um jst kinda practiced some of those as best I can [unintelligible] as far as I could. Same thing for OC8 just get as many reps as you can all day every day**

**CDR: Was there a certain point in BUD/s where you had to make a really difficult decision um that you really struggled with um but you were able to get through? Like is there one thing that stands out?**

**147: Um so there was one instance where like I-I kind of like watched someone skip an obstacle on the o-course and had to like confront that person and say hey like I dont know if like you skipped this obstacle or but thats not cool so that was something that I like really struggled with for a couple days um between me and a couple other students that hadn't seen it I just bounced ideas off of them and had a go about it**

**CDR: so you struggled with it for a couple days so you didn't confront them right away?**

**147: No, no… um**

**CDR: So, what made you confront them?**

**147: Um I think just the just the idea that it's a small thing but it's a big thing if you know fail an obstacle and don’t say hey I failed like that it kinda came down to that of like its a small thing it's just an obstacle on the o-course but it's a big thing in that you're not willing to like if you're not willing to say hey I messed this up um ya know what else are you not willing to do?**

**CDR: yeah. So why did you struggle with that do you think?**

**147: Um, well the main reason was because he um it was kind of-it was a class that I’d just been rolled into. So it was 337, I'd just been rolled into that class. I didn't have a lot of rapport with like other students um and this particular student was also like a kind of a leader in the class he was a fleet returnee he'd been through BUD/s before um so it wasn't as cut and dry as -as just one of my peers**

**CDR: yeah**

**147: It didn't feel like it to me at least.**

**CDR: What were some of the things that you think made you successful- above like all these other guys that quit?**

**147: Umm I think early on [first phase] just staying relaxed taking small opportunities to just relax and um kinda take a deep breath and clear the mind and just be like alright I’m here, just relax for example, anytime we were doing something at colors and standing at attention or like running boats, I would just look at the city of San Diego and say, I am here… alright let's go.**

**CDR: What about the guys that didn’t make it? The ones that are no longer here?**

**147: Well, humm lets see. A lot of them were really finicky about being cold, or being wet, they would complain a lot- a lot of them were big complainers.**

**CDR: What do you think about this whole experience that you feel like has changed you, like what part of you is different from when you were in BO?**

**147: Definitely more humble. This place has humbled me for sure. I don’t know anything umm and that has been really really good. um I would say look left, look right at the guys around you, your teammates- to be more focused on what is going on with them- like how they are doing, where they are at, makes it easier on you. Because you are not focused on what is hurting you.**