**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Connor Knowles**

**Date: 25 May 2020**

**Participant #: 130**

**Interviewer: Dr. Celeste Raver Luning**

Interviewer (Code in Blue)

Participant (Code in black)

Interviewer: So, the recorders are on, can I record this interview?

#130: Yes

Interviewer: This is participant 130. Sit really close, so I can catch your voice. Easy questions first, how many siblings do you have?

#130: I have two.

Interviewer: Two siblings. And what's the birth order, like where do you fall?

#130: I’m middle.

Interviewer: And what are the, what’s the gender of your siblings?

#130: Male

Interviewer: All males?

#130: Yeah

Interviewer: Your poor parents.

#130: Yeah my poor mom.

Interviewer: Um so if you think about your life experiences what might you describe as kinda your crucible or life shaping experiences other than birth?

#130: Uhmm, like as far as family goes or specific things that happened to me?

Interviewer: Anything, yeah.

#130: Uhh, I played football in highschool, kinda opened me up to uhh the military kinda taught me what it meant to be a good teammate be-be tough uhh had a really good coaching that kind of set the foundation for me. Uhh leaving, leaving home and then going to the academy so kinda just being on my own I guess. I didn’t know anyone when I went there and didn’t like...I had no military family so it was all very new to me.

Interviewer: Yeah

#130: Um, I guess having to make that adjustment.Umm, yeah.

Interviewer: So um, anything like that was like kind of super monumental in your childhood umm that just I don’t know kinda changed the trajectory of your life at all

#130: Umm, honestly I think I did this project in like the 6th grade um interviewed my grandparents about World War II and I kinda got hooked on the idea and-and I told myself that I would look I‘d never close any doors even like throughout highschool um so I'm not gonna close doors, I'm gonna figure out what I want to do and kinda run with it and um nothing really came to mind um like any other profession that I wanted to do even when I was a kid I wanted to be a baseball player but like every kid wants to be an astronaut or firefighter, or something-

Interviewer: Yeah

#130: - so I didn’t think that was really significant but I-I-I think kinda getting that sense of patriotism or learning a lot from my grandparents at that time kinda what it meant to get through hard times and stuff um yeah that kind of inspired me.

Interviewer: Now had they both been in WWII?

#130: So my grandfather served on Okinawa uh he went after the campaign like he was kind of an occupying force but umm I don’t know that was just fascinating my grandmother was at home and just kind of gutting out the time.

Interviewer: Yeah, um how do you think those experiences maybe factored into your experiences here at BUD/s?

#130: Umm, you have to be flexible you have to be like willing to adjust to things-

Interviewer: Yeah

#130: -and if you can’t then you’re kind of gunna go crazy and I think throughout my life like whether it was-usually it was a new school but um I didn't know anybody there and I always had to figure things out on my own and kind of make things for myself I guess umm

Interviewer: Did you move around a lot as a child?

#130: No, it was just um I think like 3rd grade to 4th grade went to a new school didn't know anybody um restarting like making friends going into highschool didn’t know anyone had to make friends going into the academy didn't know anybody um honestly like this was kind of the first place where like I knew people going into it which is weird that it would be here but um I knew a lot of people that were coming into this pipeline and um yeah I think being able to- to kind of be flexible and adjust like I said is kind of what helped me be successful.

Interviewer: Yeah, um how would you describe your personality and how do you think your personality contributed to you getting through BUD/s?

#130: Umm, I think …I’m laid back um but when I need to get something done I can- I can be super focused and um I guess the laid back nature allows me to decompress after having these extensive um intense focus umm yeah um

Interviewer: Um do you consider yourself kind of a calm person?

#130: Calm?

Interviewer: A calm person.

#130:Yeah, I would.

Interviewer: Have you always been that way?

#130: Yes, yeah

Interviewer: Um, describe kind of your background that led you to want to join the seal community.

#130: Uhh, so my uncle in 2005 came back from Afghanistan and he was shot 8 times and um just in a real weird spot medically and was done with the military and umm didn't really know him before because he was gone and then got to know that he was in Army SF and when I was in highschool kinda got interested in the military more as far as making it a profession and uh I went to him and-and-and he exposed me to the SOF community, he told me about the SEALs , his experience with them and um I kinda from there was just like yeah I’m gonna go for this thing.

Interviewer: Um, what about your early childhood so kind of pre-highschool years what was that like?

#130: Yeah, so I-I played baseball and basketball um my dad really...my uh I think my dad worked really hard growing up. He-he had a rough upbringing and um kind of instilled like some discipline in me and my cousin at the time my uh- he was playing baseball he ended up getting drafted into the MLB and tore his ACL and-and-and you know that fizzled out but like was on track to be something special and um when he was in highschool he was like doing these crazy workouts in my mind at the time they were like these crazy workouts to be stronger and everything and at a very young age I started training myself and I dont think its necessarily anything that developed me later on uh physically perse but the discipline that I started I guess at an early age I think made it easier to continue that kind of life um as I got older just became like a new normal um because I know like my teachers I was like kind of a weird kid I guess in that sense because I wanted to be good at baseball but I’m also this like fourth grader and my teachers like asked my parents why I was doing pushups and situps at recess while the other kids are like playing and looking back on it yeah thats incredibly weird-

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah

#130: -um but I guess it was just something I did because I wanted to be at that level he was at for whatever reason I just thought it was special.

Interviewer: What did uh your parents parenting style what was that like?

#130: Umm fair. Umm very loving but um (long pause). They were very serious all the time because they were working, they were working all the time and they didn't really have time it felt like to for them to I guess do much with us. They didnt do a lot with us.

Interviewer:Yeah

#130: Um yeah I guess one-if-maybe-like my earliest memories are like if I’m-if I was interacting with my parents like I was getting in trouble. Yeah-yeah um me and my brothers just like-.

Interviewer: Yeah. Um so, what about just how what was their discipline approach? Did they spank you, did you have timeouts? Um, did they take away toys?

#130: Yeah it was-it was um physical discipline. It was- they would ground us I guess it was more physical than the uh, the than like the other stuff I guess-

Interviewer: Yeah

#130: -but it wasn't anything that was like too aggressive or something that's like worth fighting

Interviewer:Yeah. What about teenage years? Um well I may have asked this before but did you move around at all in your childhood?

#130: Um we spent a couple years um at my grandparents house because our-we were getting our house worked on we decided to renovate it instead of move out to the suburbs and uh so we stayed out there at their house for a couple years um and that was interesting just being in a different neighborhood but that was the only moving I'd ever done.

Interviewer: Where-where are you-

#130: Chicago.

Interviewer: Chicago, okay. The city?

#130:Yes.

Interviewer:Uh, what about sports? Did you participate in sports in your teenage years, if so what sports?

#130:So I got to highschool I did uh basketball, swimming, and football.

Interviewer: Okay. Um any other like team activities, not necessarily sports, but something as a group?

#130: Mm, no. Football dominated my life. That was-that was everything so I guess that, I didn't really have anything outside of it.

Interviewer: Was anything else notable from your teenage years? I don't know was kinda formative in that time frame?

#130: No really it was- it was honestly just um like I had this interest in the military from my uncle and then the football like thing my coaches saw something in me um they thought I had a lot of potential as- as far as uhh taking a role in leading the team and um they half of them had a military background the others were like college athle- or they played football in college um some at D1 schools and that immersion, kinda like the discipline and and being that super athlete I think kinda it was like really good timing both learning about the stuff with my uncle and then and then being on this-on this team. But it was more about like “are you a good teammate are you gonna be like a good man, are you gonna do all these things, and um it was more- it wasn't as much of like are you gonna perform on the field like that was very important but the most important stuff was you know how you are as a man, how are you developing as a person um yeah can you be a good teammate.

Interviewer: What about your last 5 years leading up to BUD/s, what were they like? You said academy but did you go somewhere after that or straight here?

#130:Uh so I went to the prep school in rhode island for a year and then I went to the academy for the next four.

Interviewer: Did you (indiscernible) at the academy?

#130: No so I didn't do anything. Um I spent a couple years skydiving um with the parachute team. I trained really hard to be on the triathlon team that was something that I guess is notable is I trained super hard um to be on the triathlon team and failed both times and kinda had this moment when um I was at the academy you know I was like you want to be a SEAL um and I- and I knew being on that team was going to push me in that direction as far as like being -being the athlete that I wanted to be and I was like “man if you can’t like make this team you know I kinda had this moment of doubt um and it crushed me because I had never trained for anything like that hard and I just kinda flipped a switch I was just like lets keep pushing and see this thing through. And then it brought me into skydiving and doing other stuff.

Interviewer: Um would you consider yourself impulsive at all?

#130: Yes

Interviewer: And could you describe something that involves impulsive behavior?

#130: Sure, uh, so skydiving is kinda the first one. Uhhh, getting a motorcycle was another one. Umm, my first tattoo was on impulse.

Interviewer: How many tattoos do you have?

#130: Eight.

Interviewer: Wow, that’s a lot.

#130: Yeah

Interviewer: So were they all impulsive like tattoos?

#130: No no, it kind of developed from like wha-like an interest in it kinda like honestly with everything else, I kinda had an interest in it and then I got deeper into it whether it was jumping or building up to like my own bike or -

Interviewer: Yeah

#130: -kinda the artistic aspects to a tattoo

Interviewer: Yeah

#130: more so than kind of the tough guy kind of approach to it um. Ummm, yeah I guess probably just like small insignificant things I can do on impulse but nothing that's like gonna take me off a straight path like I'm going to do anything bad. I never feel like it's uncontrollable.

Interviewer: What about um any like speeding tickets or-

#130: No. Yeah, no I’ve never gotten a ticket.

Interviewer: What about what motivates you on a daily basis?

#130: I think it's a combination of purpose and excitement

Interviewer: Yeah

#130: Um like I want to feel something I wanna feel like uh yeah I'm getting something out of what I'm doing.

Interviewer: Yeah

#130: But then also know I'm doing it for the right reason?

Interviewer: And now kind of talking specifically about BUD/s if you think about the most challenging component whether its a specific day or event at BUD/s what was that?

#130: My-my hardest day was I got SIPE for the second time and it was way worse than I had had it before. And um I started throwing up blood on the beach and I finished the evolution and we were like laying on the surf and coughing up blood and then um we were about to go into a boat race and we were getting into the height line and guys were telling me “dude you have to go to medical like you can't keep going and um it kinda felt like a tightrope quit I guess in a way-

Interviewer: Yeah

#130:-because I wanted to stay but at the same time like I didn't want to get guys hurt-

Interviewer: Yeah

#130: -and it felt like a pretty big like moment of defeat for me and then of course like getting made fun of by instructors

Interviewer: Yeah yeah

#130: I think I ended up having like 80-82 percent - my O2 levels at 82 percent at the time and I was able to come back from it after the weekend but um that was a moment where I was like wow like this is the worst thing I've ever felt um and then the uh yeah another one would’ve been like getting rolled my-my first time getting like emotionally or not emotional - just getting invested in the class and then-and then getting rolled from it that was tough. But definitely the - the throwing up blood was like the shock factor of it like happening and then um the stuff that I explained.

Interviewer: So what um what helped you push through that?

#130: I don’t know. Yeah, I don't know just maybe its like a full retard, I don’t-

Interviewer: Is there a group dynamic that you think helps with (indiscernible)

#130: Oh for sure yeah, no I mean uh even though like BUD/s has been the hardest thing I’ve ever done its been I think it's absolutely hilarious like it’s the - I’ve laughed so hard um going through every phase of training and I think that helps like with it a lot. Especially with the last class that I was in like going between the three classes it's just like every day was hilarious. Every day was hard but the-the camaraderie like just the boys made it, sweet. Made it a lot of fun.

Interviewer: (Indiscernible) physical mental spiritual to get through BUD/s?

#130: Uhh, spiritual Im catholic um so theres that. Mental umm yeah just gut it out. There wasn’t like a specific thing I would think about. I wanted to do it for my family. Thought about my family a lot.

Interviewer: When you say family is that like parents?

#130: Yeah, yeah my parents, my brothers. Like I-I wanted to make them proud.

Interviewer: When you had to make a difficult decision during training at BUD/s, uh what went through your mind when you had to make that decision? Can you give an example of -

#130: Um, yeah we uh we had this guy in uh first phase who like cheated on the o-course and everyone really liked him and stuff and we had it was like right before our hell week party like everyones secured hell week we’re gonna go have pizza and drink beers and we were about to tell this guy like “hey we're telling the instructors that you cheated you're gonna get kicked out right and like essentially um and it was gonna affect the class because everyone was gonna find out and stuff so tried to handle it super carefully. And there was like this part that was like guys are coming up to me and like “this thing happened” like they saw it and they didn’t really want something to happen.

Interviewer: Yeah

#130: But like they had to address it and I was like thinking like do we do something do we not do something, and then I was like you know if everyon-if this bothers people then like how can you not address this thing. It's not an insignificant thing that happened y’know especially in BUD/s y’know for someone to cheat something is like a moral sin. Nowadays, I don't think it was before but now guys will just like dude thats not okay and um at this point in my career its like getting in a room with some guys and deciding what to do like hey we are going to turn this guy in if he doesn’t um that was that was tough. For someone who’d gone to BUD/s before, had to come back, and then he was in the spot like that sucked.

Interviewer:Um, why do you think you were successful at BUD/s?

#130: Uh, I think building relationships with guys. Yeah. its I mean yeah it's (indiscernible). Yeah I felt like I surrounded myself with really good people not to like carry me through but everyone would always work together and would work well and I tried to I tried my best to uh to kind of foster that environment whenever I ended up being in charge of and um I had a lot of fun doing it at the same time.

Interviewer: What about, did you notice anything different about the people that you (indiscernible)

#130: In-In-

Interviewer:(indiscernible)

#130:Um, no because I di-I didn’t. Just kinda like people are there and then they’re not.

Interviewer:Yeah

#130: No matter what the phase like I dont think people ju- at least I never put that much thought into it cus you kinda just live like a dog, you're just in the moment.

Interviewer: Yeah

#130: Um, no matter what level of training youre in. You’re just like okay whos gone what's the next thing youre gonna worry about.

Interviewer: (too quiet)

#130: I thought that would go away in first phase but it was like second and third phase too.

Interviewer:(too quiet)

#130: Yeah, yeah

Interviewer: A lot of people said that. How’d this experience change you as a person?

#130: Uh, definitely found out uh I’m way tougher than I thought I was. Um, I thought also I was gonna be - I knew I wasn’t as good as the other O’s physically that I was coming out here with like competing with the enlisted guys at the evolutions, its incredibly humbling like wow these guys are studs. Uh and I didnt expect - I knew they were gonna be like really tough, and like really athletic but I got to a certain point like look to my left and right and Im like wow these dudes are crushing me right now and uh it was like super impressive and like I said humbling.

Interviewer:(too quiet)

#130: Okay cool.

Interviewer:Thank you. Congratulations. Thanks for sitting down with me.