**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Dan McDonald**

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**Participant #: 241**

**Length of the Interview: 14:41**

Interviewer (Code in Blue): Dixon

Participant (Code in black): 241

**Name and do you mind if I record?**

**Sure uh**

**I mean not your name uh sorry, your number hahah**

**241 haha**

**Mind if I record?**

**Mhm**

**Okay great. So when did you start your BUDS class and is this your first BUDS experience?**

**Uh, it is yes. I am an original 331 member. Classed up I think August.**

**Okay, and then how many siblings do you.. I am just going to ask random questions about your background and it might seem random but there is a method to it. So how many siblings do you have and what is your birth order?**

**I am an only child.**

**Only?**

**Yes.**

**Okay and then were your parents married, separated, divorced?**

**They’re divorced.**

**And what was your relationship to them?**

Me and my mom were close. Me and my dad have always had a poor relation (unintelligible).

**Okay, and what would you say were life changing events that happened to you prior to BUDS and whatever you think is life changing that’s what I want to hear about? If any.**

**Umm, I’d say the first one was like when my dad went to jail in high school. He was like 20 years in when he came out of jail and went back in so he was pretty much been in and out of jail since high school. Uhh**

**How did that affect you coming to BUDS or your experience here?**

**Uh I don’t know. I guess it destabilized um like my uh I guess like my uh expectation on the future. Expectation of what (unintelligible). Family and all that and it kind of like took meaning away from my life. (unintelligible) I guess like finding my own.**

**Okay.**

**Another life changing that I would say is probably like pursuit in soccer career. I really wanted to be a soccer player since I was young. And um and when I was like 23 years I was like it's just not working out. Soccer was like my identity pretty much. So I basically had my identity taken away from me now. I had to wake up and find meaning and figure out what I was going to do with my life.**

**Did you have an injury or you just…**

**No it's just tried out for various teams didn’t really get signed. So you know, basically just didn’t make it.**

**Okay and how do you think your personality helped you get through BUD/S? Anything specific?**

**Um uh I don’t know I just I think. I was just thinking about this yesterday like I guess for just some reason I guess I just I can’t like been seen as weak. So I can’t quite like not like be impressed (unintelligible) at the top like I just can’t allow myself to be weak. (unintelligible) can’t allow myself to quit or seen as not good enough (unintelligible) if others are doing it, there’s no reason I can’t do it. Ya know (unintelligible)**

**What about your background led you to want to be a SEAL like do you have any SEALs that are family or friends, do you have military?**

**Uh no, I just played a video game in like seventh grade that taught me that (unintelligible)**

**\*\* Long Pause with a lot of background noise as CDR Ledford comes in the background speaking of seeing Patti after you’re done\*\***

**Okay so you played a video in seventh grade?**

**I played a video game and like I can’t explain why but I was just fascinated by like secret soldier quiet. Um I don’t know if you want me to get into this but I kind of thought about why I would like that type of I dont know like career maybe is because is like through my personality I like being like more discreet. I don’t know that’s my only self analysis.**

**That helps.**

**But I don’t know. Yeah.**

**But what about when you were a child. Like how, what was your parents disciplining style, did they spank you, did they give you timeouts, Do push ups, withholding toys?**

**My dad I think he was in the military. I’m from Ukraine. My dad’s Russian. So he was pretty strict. Yeah, I don't know forceful. So yeah, I mean you know he whipped me a few times. He was pretty aggressive and like intimidating so. I don’t know. Growing up I was always kind of scared of my dad. He was like mean to me and like uh yeah.**

**What about your mom?**

**My mom she was uh, my mom, she was nice but she was also kind of scary. My dad, when he got like aggressive or whatever. There’s only so much she can do. My dad, he was head of the household.**

**Sure. Was your mom Russian? Ukranian, also?**

**Yeah, yeah, yeah. They all spoke Russian. My mom is from Ukraine. My dad is from Russia.**

**Did you move around a lot when you were a kid?**

**Just moved once. Maybe twice. \*Clears throat\* so I was born in Ukraine. I lived with my grandma. My dad kind of wasn’t around. And my dad like took my mom to (unintelligible) to kind of set a foundation up. Find a place to live, find jobs. So I lived with my grandma until I was like 6. Then they brought me over. Um, (uintelligible) when I was a kid here I was kind of shy. I was never that close with my dad because he wasn’t around that much. So I was closer to my grandma and my mom.**

**Okay, and tell me about your teenage years, high school, middle school, did you participate in sports and what kind if you did?**

**I used to do all kinds of sports. Like basketball, baseball, uh soccer mainly. Soccer and sports also kind of kept me sane I guess. Like I was always scared of my house and wanted to get out. So you know sports were like my solace. Helped me make friends and stuff. Um so yeah.**

**And then what did you do in the last 5 years of your life prior to going to BUD/S?**

**So I was dating a girl and we lived together. While, finishing up college just playing soccer.**

**So you were playing soccer for a college?**

**Yeah, I was playing soccer and when I graduated I was like trying out for professional teams. And with the girlfriend at the time.**

**What college was that?**

**It’s called Holy Family university. Its a small catholic university. (unintelligible) I was trying to make through with some teams at the time. And yeah uh also looking for work. Pay bills. I had a lot of relationship problems with her. (Unintelligible) Stress until we broke up. It was totally hard to get out of the relationship and when we finally broke up it was kind of like a weight had been lifted. I also had kind of just gave up pursuing soccer. Had to work. But not to get too deep into the weeds, but, I guess like what life is like here, is something about me.(unintelligible) I always knew I had to do something meaningful, something good. I couldn’t just be something (unintelligible)... I don’t know.**

**Right, you wanted a..**

**I didn’t want to be just average. I had to do something. Either a professional soccer player or like I said SEALS (unintelligible)**

**Was Holy Family University Division 1? Division 2?**

**Its Division 2.**

**Would you consider yourself impulsive? Like do you have tattoos or… no? Okay.**

**What do you think was the most challenging part of BUD/S? If you can think of one day that was challenging what was it and what motivated you to push through?**

**So I would say it was probably like Wednesday of Hell week. So like um wednesday my body started breaking down. So like I was not performing well and the instructors kind of honed in on me and some of my own classmates. They can really socially isolate you like social isolation basically felt like no one wanted me there. Uh, that was probably the hardest.**

**So what made you push through? And did you feel like you were supported by the group or were they?**

**No, I didn’t feel like I was supported. I felt like no one wanted me there. But and going back to like, I just can’t be seen as weak so I just couldn’t quit. They can drop me, get rid of me, but I can’t just like give up. Whatever happens, happens to me but it is not going to be on my end.**

**Do you have any special practices that help you get through like physical, mental, spiritual that help you get to the next thing?**

**Um I mean. Practices? Like what kind of practices?**

**Like meditation, or prayer or physical activity. Whatever helps you get grounded. And if you don’t have anything that's fine too.**

**I guess just think about my past and know what’s important. And what needs to be done. And its not going to be easy. Remember that. I mean its a philosophy I guess.**

**Okay, and did you have any difficult decisions at BUD/S, if you had something what went through your mind as you made that decision and what did you struggle with? Like classmates cheating or anything like that? And if you didn’t have anything that's fine too.**

**I don’t know. I guess the one thing that was difficult was when I did not do something an instructor asked me to do and I was tempted to like just lie about it. It was basically like “you owe me 100 8-counts by tomorrow.” I didn’t finish them. I could have easily been like “Yeah I did ‘em” the next day. It was just like I can’t lie. And I ended up getting in trouble for (unintelligible) the next day. That’s the only thing I can think of right now.**

**Okay. No, that’s good. So there’s so many people. You started with this class, Right? So there’s so many people that get rolled, dropped. If you could think of one thing, what made you successful?**

**Um, I mean “1.” like I said earlier, like I just**

**Stubborn?**

**Yeah like I can’t be seen as weak. Like being labeled as weak is like I don’t know. To me that’s like seriously everything. (unintelligible) People seeing me as weak or perceiving myself as weak. And 2. (unintelligible) Whether it is shooting or diving or whatever, I guess I am decently competent, I guess I never really had trouble with like that part.**

**So you’re competent, but did you have competency in those things coming in or did you learn quickly or?**

**Yeah, I guess I was always good at sports so I just had a natural inclination towards athletic things so maybe it just transfers over to here.**

**What about those people that you saw quit? What was different about those people than you?**

**Uhh, I don’t know I guess I am (unintelligible) very introspective for the first half of it. Contemplate the meaning a lot. I guess I can get to understand what’s important in life.**

**What do you think, did this BUDS experience change you as a person?**

**I’ve reached like my lowest lows here. I breakthrough and see that when you’re at the**

**Lowest lows, that there’s still hope and everything must pass basically. Everything always**

**passes.**

**Wow, that’s a great lesson.**

**It always passes.**

Yeah, is there anything else in this interview that I should have asked you that you think that it would be good for the Navy to know if they interview people that come in here? Anything I missed? Oh you should ask this and that will really help?

**I guess to contemplate the meaning of life. (unintelligible) Something along those lines.**

**Because I mean I had my meaning, my direction taken away from me during teenage years.**

Okay, awesome. I think that's very helpful.