**TRANSCRIBER NAME: GELBACH**

**Date: 09 AUG 2020**

**Participant #: 4**

**Length of the Interview: 24:39**

Interviewer (Code in Blue):

Participant (Code in black):

**Interview Guide**

1. **So I’m going to record this, you good with that?**

**Yeah Absolutely.**

**Uh, just helps with my notes, um and let’s see, what’s your, so you’re number 4 and 379, kay. Alright, so I am with uh participant number 4, and uh you are also 379 as well at one point. The time is 10:52, 10 February, Commander Ledford. Alright, I’m gonna ask you, I’m just gonna give you some softball questions to get started with**

**Okay perfect**

**Uh you good with us recording this?**

**Yes**

**Okay**

1. **Uh when did you start BUD/S**

**Um so with class 338 um (unintelligible 1:15-1:17) prep, so that would have been end of May kind of beginning of June.**

**Okay, started with 338 and this is your first BUD/S experience?**

**Yes sir**

1. **Okay. uh siblings, how many siblings do you have**

**Uh so i have kind of a confusing family, so with me and my uh with my mom and my dad its me and my oldest sister, uh she’s 27**

1. **So you, how old is, how old are you.**

**Uh I’m 30.**

1. **30? And then your sister is 27?**

**She’s 27 and then I have an older stepbrother, who’s uh 31, and then another older stepbrother who’s 34.**

**Your brother 31?**

**Yep.**

**And stepbrother 34?**

**Yep.**

**But you didnt, did you live with them kind of growing up?**

**Um so we moved in with the one who’s 34 when I was 10, um and then my stepbrother Mike was 31, he always lived with his mom.**

**Okay. So uh lived together, almost part of the family.**

**Yep**

1. **Um so parents uh, for you, were they married the whole time, divorced?**

**Um yeah my mom and my dad probably separated when I was 4, divorced by the time I was probably 6**

**Okay, 4. Um and then you, did you live with your mom, dad?**

**Uh yeah so I was with my mom and then um when I was 10 my mom got remarried and moved in um with my stepfather**

**(unintelligible 3:10-3:22). Were you close with any, mom, dad, stepdad?**

**Yeah, absolutely, um very close with all 3, um closest with my mom for sure um. Really fluid relationship with my dad, probably more like a, you know, best friend, older brother type relationship with him, not quite as much of like a, you know, kind of overbearing parent, um, and then also really close with my stepdad also**

1. **Okay. Okay. Looking at life changing events that happened before BUD/S.**

**Yeah**

**Is there something that happened that kind of really affected you?**

**Uh for sure, um so my father passed away in a construction accident when I was 23, uh, so that definitely rocked my world.**

**Anything before that, you might?**

**Um, honestly not, you know, I went to um, I went to boarding school um you know in high school so that was like a little bit of a change, but um you know I was definitely interested and willing, but um, you know I think I got used to being pretty independent, you know, from a from a fairly young age, and, and probably also I think that really like, you know, helped me to kind of like, you know, cause you’re going through puberty and all this stuff and you’re having to, alone and like build some really close friendships and like really value those friendships**

1. **And that is my next question is how do you think those experiences factored into your experience here at BUD/S**

**Yeah, I I think that definitely just kind of being willing to reach out and uh opening yourself up to the guys, and, you know, whether its uh a happy occasion or you’re feeling a bit stressed you need to kind of vent, um, feeling comfortable doing that, um, definitely makes things more sustainable**

1. **Kay. What do you think about your personality in particular that helps contribute to your progression through BUD/S?**

**Um**

1. **What’s unique about your personality?**

**Yeah, um, I don’t really think anything is too unique, honestly, I mean, pretty good sense of humor, uh, kinda sarcastic, so uh you know I think that definitely helped me to take everything with a little bit of a grain of salt and kind of look past some of the you know BUD/S games that are meant to really like, you know, make everything seem more apocalyptic and stressful than it is, um, you know, definitely uh you know, make good friends fast and I think that’s, you know, probably the biggest thing for me**

1. **Good group of guys here. How about your background did you have any SEAL family, friends, uh military members.**

**Um**

**Kind of anything like that?**

**Um so um you know in my family like my grandfather, sure, my uncles, but um one of my best friends from high school um went to the Naval Academy and has been in the teams for a couple of years, so, um, I think he was kind of one of the main uh, factors, that, you know, as I got a little bit older and totally went a different direction, helped kind of, like, continue to uh kind of like pique my interest and uh keep like the blood stirring a little bit**

**So he’s probably the one who probably planted the seed more than anything?**

**Um so it was definitely something I was like always super fascinated by, really curious, like as a little kid, you know, kind of like running around on a Friday night like painting our faces camouflage and whatever, totally like um went in a different direction, definitely, um, you know my mom was not particularly infatuated with the idea uh um and, you know, um, went to college, like, was working in New York City, kind of uh, you know, ended up kind of circling back, but um, but yeah, so, so my buddy Sander like, you know, just a really good friend, but keep up with him and uh, you know, totally like kind of hit it off, just, just as friends and he he comes from like the blue-blooded Naval Academy military family, like his dad was a colonel, two of his brothers went to the Naval Academy and like um, so, you know, he just kind of the only thing that he knows and so uh, just really cool you know, how like picking his brain about NSW and obviously like talk to somebody really candidly**

**Yeah**

**Cause like when you know,**

**Yeah for sure**

**my experiences with like recruiters was just like the exact opposite, you know, no one knows anything and its just kind of like,**

**Yeah**

**you know, yeah, like, do better on google**

**Yeah**

**So, um, so yeah so he he definitely was a a really special like resource and kind of mentor for me through the whole like um decision making process.**

1. **How about your um childhood, um, like how was the uh, were you disciplined as a child or what was the parenting style?**

**Um, you know um, I think I was given a lot of lee way honestly, um, you know, um, I was generally always a pretty good kid, and um, I think my parents were always like super bear with me, um, really for the most part like it would, would would really have only been like my mom doing any of like the serious parenting moment, like um.**

**Any spankings or?**

**No**

**Timeouts?**

**Yeah, like probably a a “go to your room” you know.**

**Yeah, have some alone time. So she was mostly the disciplinarian here with her?**

**Yeah, yeah, I mean so even um. So so yeah I mean so even though like my step dad’s always been in my life he was never really like, he’s just a super like laid back easy going dude, um, you know, so he wasn’t really ever like very assertive and so I know its kind of like “okay, send him home, he really fucked up” like whatever you know, just.**

**Right**

**He’s a super supportive, um, really good guy, but just kind of always like defaulted to my mom in those more,**

**Yep**

**You know, kind of serious situations.**

1. **Kay. Um, what kind of moving, did you guys move around a lot?**

**Um, not a not a whole lot, um, was born in the South River so uh Boston um, (unintelligible 10:59-11:02) and uh you know, and then my dad was always in uh (unintelligible 11:06-11:08) uh, so we’d like go up there on the weekends, um. Then my mom got remarried uh, we moved to Chelmsford Massachusetts, so like, uh, you know, 20, 25 minutes away. Um, I guess like the boarding school experience though was probably um, you know, a little bit unique not necessarily in that like you’re moving but you know kinda making new friends, meeting people from all over the place.**

1. **What about uh, team sports, activities, what did you do in your teenage years?**

**Yeah definitely like a huge part of my childhood um, you know, always played football, lacrosse, um when I was a little kid played everything, baseball, soccer, et cetera, um, and then, um, you know played both football and lacrosse in high school and college.**

**Which one did you, you played both, was there one that you were more focused on?**

**Um, yeah I played both, um, football was kind of like my first love, but I was a better lacrosse player, um, and I only played two years football in college, um four years lacrosse.**

1. **So what about the five years, five years prior to you coming to BUD/S? Walk me through kind of what, what did you do for those five years before you went to BUD/S.**

**Um, so I graduated, um, I was 23 when I graduated college, um, and so**

**Where did you graduate from?**

**Uh, Tufts University, um, so moved to New York City with my girlfriend, and uh started working at a construction management firm and basically, you know, um, did that for, I think, three years, little bit, give or take, um, and then um Sierra and I hit a little rocky patch at the time, and I was kind of like burnt out on New York City somewhat um, so I spent, I, I went out to Jackson, Wyoming um and spent winter as a ski bum out there with some high school buddies, um, and basically you know had some money saved up from the city, um, found a job, like, flipping burgers at this restaurant on the mountain, so I was really only working like two days a week, and mostly just, just skiing all the time.**

**How long do you think you were there, approximately?**

**Um six months, ski season basically**

**Six months. And then after that BUD/S?**

**Yeah I did. Er so no uh there was like probably another year and a half in there, um so um**

**At Jackson?**

**No so I did like a, did like a big road trip after that, uh, and then uh, then I came back home and my uh, my my parents have uh an old farmhouse they were like renovating up in Maine, and uh, my step dad runs an oyster farm up there, so there’s like tons of projects to kinda stay busy with, um, so I was like doing kinda odds and ends for my folks and working on an oyster farm, kind of getting in shape, um.**

**All that was about another year and a half?**

**Yeah.**

**And BUD/S.**

**Yep.**

1. **Would you consider yourself impulsive?**

**Compulsive?**

**Imp, Impulsive.**

**Impulsive?**

**Yeah.**

**No, not, no. (Unintelligible 14:58-15:00). Not at all.**

1. **Any tattoos?**

**No.**

1. **What do you think was probably the most challenging thing of BUD/S? Like what was the hardest like that you had to**

**Um. I mean honestly for me I think it was like, the hardest part was making the decision to come and actually pull the trigger and do it, um, cause I think that that’s where like, you know, I was really like you know, cause it was a hundred percent you know I understood that like I’m signing a blank check so this is what, you know, um, this is gonna be the reality and, no, no kind of other option, so, uh, I, I think personally like that was where I was kind of like, are you sure, okay are you sure you’re sure, um, cause, yeah, just, kind of, just needed to know that I was a hundred percent invested, and yeah so, I think, I think that was where, you know, ment, mentally for me was the hardest part.**

**What, uh, and what kind of pushed you through, like what made you decide when you finally said it was pulling the trigger?**

**Um, you know I think just kinda continuing having more and more conversations with you know, my, my parents, loved ones, and just kind of like, um, you know, realizing that like I did like have their support, and this wasn’t gonna just be apparently some kind of like, you know, selfish crusade to go on, or you know, not gonna be like torturing everyone, making them step on my whatever, so yeah.**

1. **Where there any practices that you did like on a daily basis like, visible, mental, spiritual practices that kinda helped you get through or anything?**

**Um. No, n not really I don’t think, I mean I, I think that like I’m definitely I’m not at all like a, like a religious person, but um, I definitely would, especially like in phase like on the weekends, I would try and like, you know, wake up kind of early I maybe just kind of instituted that on my own, and then kinda get out on the beach and just kinda hang and, not really, not really think about anything, just, you know, um, I really love uh the outdoors, and so I would go and get in some kind of like uh beautiful natural place**

**Yep**

**And just kind of like reset, um, I, I think is definitely something I try to do.**

**How long would you reset?**

**Um not too long usually like, get an iced coffee, 30 minutes, 45 minutes, just kind of hangout.**

1. **Did you ever have to make a really difficult decision at BUD/S, something that you struggled with, uh, maybe running classmates out or turning in a shitty classmate, or something where you just you grappled with making a decision?**

**Um, you know... um I mean I guess there were there was definitely. There was like one moment that comes to mind where we did like... you know the instructors kind of made us run this guy out of a boat, but a at the time you’re just kind of in zombie mode, and, you know, I’m not really sure it was like a conscious decision but like we definitely did do it, um.**

**Do what?**

**So it um, the, it was a buddy of mine who had kind of been, kind of been dragging, um, and I think this was Wednesday of Hell Week, um, you know they kind of, they pulled him out of the boat, and then it was, it was all because they they kind of created this boat they were like alright, like, you’re gonna, like you can’t, you can’t keep up, talking to this guy. And we had just kinda finished a chow run, um, gotten to like over by 618, kinda stopped everyone, they were like okay, like Gardner, this person, that person, like get under this boat, like you’re gonna run straight down the beach as fast as you can until Amarant falls out. Um, and uh, yeah, so, we we ran him out twice. But, but again, it wasn’t really like okay like, is this, consciously like, is this the right thing.**

**Yeah**

**You know, or whatever.**

**It wasn’t like, it wasn’t you guys uh making that decision you were just basically.**

**Yeah collectively right we were kinda told to. But ot other than that really like there’s, you know, can’t can’t really do anything that comes to mind.**

**Is that something that’s bothered you?**

**Um no I mean I couldn’t really help but think that like maybe he got did a little bit dirty, but um no, not really.**

1. **Kay. Why do you think you were successful at BUD/S?**

**Um I, I think I was successful just because like I had really taken the time ahead of time um, you know, to make sure that this is what I wanted to do and that like I had kind of given myself every opportunity not to do it. Um, you know, and so I, I definitely like, you know, signed the blank check when I showed up and um, just kind of put my head down and finished it.**

**Yeah cause you were uh what, you were 26?**

**Um, no so yeah when I went to, so when I went to boot camp I was uh 28.**

**Okay. 28?**

**Yeah.**

**So by the time you got here you’re 29?**

**Yeah, so, actually today’s my 30th birthday.**

**Oh, Happy Birthday!**

**Thank you.**

**Alright! So um yeah so you’re one of the older guys in the class?**

**Yeah, definitely.**

1. **Um, did you notice anything about the guys who didn’t make it?**

**Um.**

**What’s different from them than the guys who are here?**

**You know I, I think maybe it's just um, maybe people that didn’t fully understand what they were getting into.**

**How so, they didn’t understand?**

**Um, I don’t know, I think that it's easy to you know kinda think about… potentially being a team guy and it's like okay, this seems awesome, you know, why not give it a shot? And like, you know if that’s really your mentality like, hell, I’ll just, you know, see how it goes, I feel like more often than not those people ar, aren’t successful.**

1. **How do you, how do you feel like this, ch uh, experience has changed you, has changed you?**

**Um, I, I think that like, I don’t know, I mean I think that, in little way I think it’s made me a little bit more emotionally colder \*laughs\* like I definitely, I, I, you know, like at least like that’s what my girlfriend will tell you.**

**Aw. \*Laughs\*But do you feel it?**

**Yeah, no-**

**Really?**

**I think it's real-**

**Why? How so?**

**I feel like you just, you know, you you’re, maybe it's one of those things that will reset once we’re out of BUD/S, but, you know, you’re just so like, you know, kind of used to being like able to compartmentalize things and just kind of like zone out a little bit. I think, uh, uh, I think that might’ve transferred over a little bit, to, to like, you know, like my personal emotions.**

1. **What else, is there anything else that you can think of that I should be asking about, what makes the difference, might help you or hurt you?**

**Yeah, I, I guess, kinda to that extent, I think being able to kinda like compartmentalize things, um kinda zone out a little bit, um, definitely like uh you know, it it’s something that I find myself doing a hundred things also, but like, you know, Master Chief Matt Nourachi kind of like talked about like going to a different place during like surf torture or whatever, um, definitely was something that, that worked, worked well for me...I think also like just generally being like, a little bit older, and recognizing that like, you know, there is light at the end of the tunnel, and like, you know it’s uh, you can, you have a little bit more perspective so you can, its easier to kind of put your head down and grind when you know like okay like this is you know, this isn’t gonna last forever.**

**Awesome. Alright, really appreciate it.**

**Yeah, thank you very much for your time.**

**It is awesome, this is super, super helpful.**

**Alrighty.**

**So.**

**Awesome.**

**Alright, thanks a lot, turn this off.**