**TRANSCRIBER NAME: BRADLEY**

**Date: 10 AUG 2020**

**Participant #: 97**

**Length of the Interview: 00:26:45**

Interviewer (Code in Blue):

Participant (Code in black):

**Interview Guide**

Alright and I'm with number 97.

That was my first note card and then I was given this.

Ok so 97 and 355

Yes sir

Time is 0943, 10 Feb, this is Commander Ledford and I'm gonna to go through this. And you're good with us recording…?

Absolutely

Ok

Yup

So I wanna go through some softball questions to get started with.

Sure

Umm What buds class did you start with?

Uhhh 338

You started with 338. And was that your first-

it was

buds experience?

Yes

Ok

1. How many uhh siblings do you have?

I have two older brothers.

Two older brothers so uhh. What. your age is?

I'm 26 year old. They're both like 32 and 30

So one bro is 32 or 30 and another brother is 32

Yes sir

Ok. and then parents, married, separate, divorced?

Yup they're together

Always been together?

Yes. They're both in their mid 60s

And how is your relationship with them?

Uhh, its, it's solid. Uhh With my dad i'm extremely close he's one of my best friends and mentors. And with my mom I think by me coming to haha NSW it's been hard for her but we're working on it. Trying to get closer, but my dad and I are very similar so. Very strong relationship.

Mom is just kind of worried about you?

I think yeah i think she she had worked hard uhh for our family kinda being the breadwinner wanted me to probably use more of my education toward the corporate direction. That was not what I wanted. And uhh she's come around toward what we're doing but it took a while. And uh yeah that's kinda where we stand right now. Just trying to piece together back some like.. Some just some good rapport .

What does she do?

Uhh She was a CFO for a construction company and she just retired this year so she's newly retired

What about your dad?

My dad’s an insurance agent.

1. \*clicks tongue\* What about, looking at your life events that happened prior to coming to buds like what were the things that really shaped you?

Uhh so being apart of sports teams was a massive part of my identity and also just uh learning about uh human potential and So I played uh soccer hockey and lacrosse in high school and uhh I ended up playing division 1 lacrosse at UNC chapel hill and uh we won a national championship there and uh myself and ensign mathi who is in um 338 kind of had a big part in why we kind of changed the culture there and turned things around. And so that had a big uh a big part in me wanting to do this. Was just being on a really good team and being devoted to something. And so that commemorate piece was definitely what shaped me the most. I would say being aware of other people's backgrounds from working and from playing hockey in Buffalo which is where I'm from. Had a whole lot of friends who didn't have a lot of opportunities. Uh who relied on sports teams to benefit their families and so that was extremely helpful. Just being cognisant of what's what. Um and just I think that's kind of helped me here being able to relate to guys that maybe have um been looked down upon or maybe felt like they never had a chance to get out. But um yeah those experiences were huge for me. Building confidence and learning how to communicate so uh yeah

1. And that that covers the next question about how do uh these experiences factor into your experience at buds. Uh what's your personality? What do you think about your personality that contributed to your progression through here?

I think uhh empathy is probably the biggest thing um understanding how to relate to other people over the same things. Make sure that guys feel valued um so i think that comes from my father. Uh my father’s he's a great hockey coach, youth hockey coach. Played college hockey and williams college and all his brothers played college hockey, had a lot of cousins play hockey and um I think having um a little bit of you know awareness for guys that are going through a hard time and making sure you help lift them is probably my most redeeming quality as an officer and definitely makes me I think stand out um and I guess my personality I like to (\*unintelligible 5:45-5:48) … you know um really cognizant of details and trying to get the job done so those are probably the two things as an officer.

What about your background um that lead you to become apart of the community, did you have any seal friends or family-

So there was

-in the military?

There was a DEVGRU seal who I coached his son in lacrosse, uhh his son kinda shared some words on uhh how I’d been coaching and how I had been interacting with guys on the team so his dad came up to me one time and said hey I don't know if you have a direction about where you want to go after college but I think you might want to take a look at this. Uhh that was in 2014 and uh ever since then uh I just had the seed had been planted and I was just obsessed with it so uh I just started to look into the military specifically the seal pipeline and uh my grandfather also fought in world war 2, he was a lieutenant commander uh on a navy sub chaser and uh his leadership for our family was inspiring to me and then just kinda growing up from like having some things, I wanted to give back so that was... I thought the military is the best way to do it. I thought about firefighting for a long time but I like the military more.

About your childhood, how were you disciplined as a child? Like were your parents very strict, did they spank you, they put you in time out, pull your toys?

There was there was definitely uh like spanking when was I was younger uhh but up until like around 5 or 6 and then after that it became more of about trust kind of uh agreement, you know like do you do things the right way, you're respectful and you're a good guy were going to give you more leeway to experience things and I think from having two older brothers kind of also brought about a pretty different place. I was able to see things early on which I think a lot of people weren't in terms of just like how the inner city works and how being close to friends whose dads are in jail or dads are... have kids with 5 different women and you're playing on sports teams with these guys and these guys don't know where they're gonna get their next meals so uh thats was uh that was huge so in terms of discipline and just it was about trust between my parents and I but uh and when I violated that they definitely like grounded me and locked me down make me focus on school or they would limit my exposure to sports when I was acting poorly so I think by the time id gotten to be like 12 i had just curbed that attitude I had... (Unintelligible 8:48-8:51)... kind of curbed that and uh I became more of a disciplined guy so.

Alright uh did you guys move around a lot or?

Uhh no just within buffalo. My mom started to have more success in her job so we had a little bit more financial flexibility but early on it was kinda tight and so um we just stayed in buffalo just in a better house so ya

And then team sports you talked about working on team sports?

Yes

Lacrosse?

So uh soccer hockey lacrosse and uh I had an option to play all three in college but uh I chose lacrosse

So through the last 5 years prior to coming to BUDS what did you do before coming here?

So I graduated from college in 2017 uh

UNC right?

Yes those summers in college I worked construction uh mostly under the table uh for friends and family back home and then after college I had a series of odd jobs. I was a salesman for a metals and chemicals company in Buffalo, I was a hockey and lacrosse coach and then I also did administrative work for my mom's construction firm as well on the weekends so I was trying to save as much money as I could so I could train and then like have the luxury of like working independently and train with a performance coach to try and get me ready for SOAS. I came to SOAS and then I got a BUDS contract so…

How long were you training?

Umm from august of 2017 until july of 2018 that was my soas class was that july and then I got picked up for OCS I went to OCS in november of 2018. So it was about a 16 month process for me. From starting training to eventually going to OCS. And I thought really about enlisting too but uhh I wanted to go to SOAS so.

So basically graduate August 2017 from UNC, you were on sales, you were coaching hockey for about 16 months while you were training?

Yeah

And then you go to OCS

I had an internship uh at a at a insurance company as well towards the end um I had to navigate something with my boss who I was selling metals and chemicals for. I just wanted something to do and I knew I was going to get picked up so I just wanted to get some more experience so I had an internship for three months and that was a great experience.

Would you consider yourself an impulsive person?

Im-Im-Impulsive?

Impulsive yes

I, I definitely think so yeah. I think um calculated more often than not but if I want to do something or if I see something as a good opportunity I take it, but uhm I, I initially transferred schools so I started out at Denison University in Ohio and I was kinda like a late bloomer for lacrosse and I had had a lot of success my freshman year uhm and that fall I knew I could play at a higher level so I decided to transfer to UNC and I kinda left, I mean I could’ve had a really really solid career at Denison and like probably won a national championship there as well but I would have been the guy and I decided that UNC was kind of was like a grinder you know. Apart of the club, I wasn't the talented guy. I was the guy who kinda had to earn everything and uhm that was probably the more impulsive decision I made. I was like “I want something more” but uhm I think that most people probably wouldn't have done that so I got a lot of ridicule for that but uhm impulsive I guess like things I could also think of honestly would be I got to travel after I graduate college. I made a decision to take a 3 week trip all throughout europe and I had a series of friends that were overseas so I planned this trip using the money I saved throughout college and I went from country to country and just didn't take like, ya know I didn't like take like a long time to plan this trip I was just like “I needed to go experience something new before I started my training for the teams.” Yeah that was a great trip.I mean uh I guess uh impulsives i guess just like climbing or just doing hiking or jumping as a kid I never really had any fear. When I was ten years old I would go and do this 50 foot jumps with my dad and he was like “Holy shit man what are you doing?” but he always wanted me to experience those things for myself and challenge myself so.

What about tattoos? Do you have any tattoos?

I do I have one that's for our team, a national championship tattoo. Each guy had something a little bit different but I think about 30 guys on our team got something to honor that.

Yeah

And then I have one on my hip that's very small it's just a Led Zeppelin lyric so… but not really seeking to get more. I just kinda wanted to get something at the time.

1. Awesome. What about, what do you think is the most challenging part of BUD/S like uh think about your hardest day or event or...

So I got rolled in 2nd phase for OC5, buddy gear exchange. I had had pneumonia from hell week and uh I think I didn't want to take the roll before 2nd phase because I was in that class and it was a very special class and uh I didnt… I didnt want to not graduate with my best buds and uh so I tried to push the envelope and I was severely i think diminished and in a way I wasn't ready to go and mentally I wasn't as locked on as I had been throughout all of 1st phase I was just so kinda uh focused on the fact that I was still trying to recover from Hell Week. Uh I just performed really poorly and I uh I got Recdrop. Recognized drop from the program. First thing I had ever failed as BUD/S, had kinda been known as a top performer and uh had done really well up until that point and I felt like my world was kinda turning upside down because I got Rec dropped. I was like “ahhh”

Because of your performance for OC5?

Yeah and uh it it definitely forced me to look inward and just stay focused on the fact that ya know you probably will get another shot as long as you just ya know be patient and keep working. So I just trained like crazy and dove like crazy and tried to get my lungs ready to go for OC5 by just doing a lot of breath work and um getting my endurance back up and um the second time came around and I crushed it and I was happy with that result because I think I had spent so much time focusing on “hey this is your option, you either improve on that weakness or not and say no I need to feel sorry for myself” and uh that was a big confidence booster after the fact but that was my hardest time at BUDS for sure.

Yup

I had about 4 weeks of being Rec. dropped with no word about when my board was gonna be.

So what got you through that, that time? Those 4 weeks?

Um I had a couple seal mentors that were extremely helpful to me. one of them being that DEVGRU seal that initially mentored me uh.

You talk to him through that period?

I did. Another one who uh actually lived in Chapel Hill so I knew him from out in college, uh and Commander (Unintelligible name time 17:04). He interviewed me for SOAS um and we had developed a nice rapport during soas and he was there for me just giving me advice, that just to stay focused don't let it deter you from your dreams and you goals. And I just trained like a madman I got in unbelievable shape so I got ready to go

1. Were there any daily practices like physical mental spiritual something that you did on a consistent basis that also helped with the challenges?

Uh I read a little about stoicism, about Mark Aurelius and uh I would, I had done it throughout college and as well as in 1st phase but not with the same consistency, I had a journal. I wrote a lot I wrote about my goals each day and I also wrote out my long term goals and I uh I just thought about kinda like envisioned in my head what ringing that bell at the pool would feel after pool comp. and that was like my driving factor. I would like use that image to propel you so I just thought about that image for a while. Same thing when I was going through hell week. Seeing that american flag at the top of the berm that was what got me through Hell Week like “I'm gonna see that” so.

1. Is there a difficult decision maybe that you could uh that you experienced or you really really struggled with?

Yes uh I, I am grateful I made the choice that I did but I feel bad about the consequences it had which there was a guy in our class 338 in 1st phase. He had kinda gotten through Hell Week in my idea he snuck through. A lot of guys felt that way as well and he- this guy definitely had discipline issues like authority issues and uh he missed curfew and he also lied about having a car and had stuff in his car which is why he lied and we had this inspection during one of our PIAI akk the instructors were asking who had cars on base uh we need to check your vehicles it's a mandated thing and uh I noticed he didn't roger up and I also noticed he didn't (unintelligible 19:36-19:37) I thought he could have gotten us in trouble because I thought they were keeping tabs on us and our OIC at the time had gotten word through the grapevine through other people that yeah this guy has a car because I had visually seen him drive off base that day that we had to do the inspection. I was kind of like (unintelligible 19:56-19:58). I didn't really want to be put in that position uh I didn't think it was my place but I also didn't want the class to be reprimanded for someone who was selfish so I had to be the guy that confirmed that I saw this and then he ended up getting dropped from the class and dropped from training but he had, he also had other things that contributed to that decision and they wouldn't have dropped him if he had a clean slate or something like that. It definitely, it definitely like stayed with me for a bit because I was like damn it that's not the kinda guy I want to be known as. As like some guy that throws people under the bus but on the same token this guys totally looking out for himself, not the class and our cadre specifically said if you guys are out of line we will hammer you and so I just uh I wanted to do the right thing by rogering up when somethings asked but I felt pretty bad about that because I just squashed some guys dreams. However if that guy got into a command on deployments and stuff -

Exactly

-is that the honorable guy you want to be in the command? So that's what kinda what kept me in check so.

1. Why do you think you were successful going through BUDS?

I think the empathy piece, being able to relate to people, and pull up others according to their needs when they needed it. I think that's what made me stand out as an officer and also just as a person. A lot of people have made those comments throughout the past couple days since we graduated they’re like “that's what we’re gonna remember you.” You know all the enlisted guys will go to SQT and we will go to JOTC and uh that definitely, I appreciate that um that stands out (unintelligible 21:52-21:55)

What uh about the ones who didn't make it? What was different about them?

Uh I would say their overall commitment to the bigger picture not necessarily just the pain of being in BUDS but do you want to look at your buddy with honor and pride for overcoming adversity and sacrificing for the men beside you. I think that's something people probably lose sight of. You're so caught in their individual pain and suffering, not even suffering, pain and it overcomes them and uh I saw some really really good officers and enlisted guys not make it through 339’s Hell Week. I was working that Hell Week, and I couldn't believe it. I was like these guys ya know if they just took a deep breath and thought about it for 30 more minutes they probably wouldn't quit. And uh yeah that was tough there was a lot of guys that (unintelligible 22:59-23:02) solid individuals who could've been really solid SEALS um had all the characteristics that you'd want. Um I think it's just making that conscious decision.

1. How do you feel this experience has changed you?

Definitely made me more patient um gave me some humility. I think that's the piece I can continue to work on that's just always someone better than you smarter than you faster than you so just continue to be a good listener and try to retain information um and um try to pass it forward. If someone reaches out to me who wants to go to BUD/S I gonna do everything I to help them because I never really had a lot of that list of individuals I mentioned um people kinda chilled and think you're crazy you think you make it through BUD/S? Even my parents. My mom (unintelligible 24:05-24:08)... made me feel insignificant for wanting to try and do this so.

Is there anything else you think I should have asked about what got you through or helped you or hurt you.

Umm maybe about funny experiences because I think humor and I think um lightheartedness is an extremely helpful um aspect of this training. You meet some of the funniest guys ever throughout BUD/S and I think that actually does play into getting through some difficult evolutions and times um specifically Hell Week. Some of the jokes that are going on or watching some guys uh do instructor impressions and stuff like I think it's extremely valuable and I know a lot of people agree. I would say the fact that being able to laugh at BUD/S is the reason why people can keep pushing forward. Umm anything else? Um maybe asking guys what they're reading. I think reading is extremely valuable especially in San Clemente Island when the guys would have downtime and we were always reading and sharing each other's books.

What are you reading right now

Uh Im reading Man’s Search For Meaning by Viktor Frankl.

What made you pick up that book?

Uh So my friend got it and I heard about it from my brother as well. It’s just about how looking at the bigger picture of ya know suffering and torment and how it helps shape men uh I also reading Band of Brothers so uh between those two. It's more about the platoon experience from war... (unintelligible 26:10) … just his experience. I just uh I’ll reread sections over and over again just to understand what that story is like in those places. I really like historical, historical like works and nonfiction. Try to keep those on my list.

Alright thank you that was awesome that was really really good yeah I really appreciate all your uh comments it was great.

Sure.

Alright see you.