**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Isaac Bengel**

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**Participant #: 348**

**Length of the Interview: 22:19**

Interviewer (Code in Blue):

Participant (Code in black):

OK. Is it okay if I record that interview?

Yes.

And then you're participant ID numbers.

Seventy three, and three four eight.

OK. Seventy three and three Forty eight. So easy questions first. Um what class BUDS class did you start in.

Uh 338.

OK.

Got rolled into 339.

And when did you get rolled into 339?

In second phase first, OC-8.

OK. How many siblings do you have?

I'm one of five.

Wow, OK. And what's the birth order?

I have an older sister, I'm second. And then a younger brother, he's the middle guy he's kind of weird. And then one sister and the littlest is a brother,.

Ok, Sister.

Older sister. Younger sister. Two younger brothers

So you're number two?

Yes.

Um, and then what's your situation? Two parent household are those from the same parents, all 100 percent full siblings?

Yeah.

Um, and then what's your kind of relationship with their parents? Close?

Yeah we're really close. My whole family is pretty much I mean, just really close, yeah.

[Uh, where did you grow up?

I grew up all over the place. I was born in Wyoming.

OK

And didn't live there very long and moved to a Eskimo village in Alaska.

OK

Then I moved from there to Central America for three years and then I moved to Guam.

And so what took you guys moving all around?

We were Christian missionaries.

OK.

And then he joined the army.

OK.

Went to Hawaii.

Got it. He's still in the army?

Not anymore. He's out.

And so were they you woulds all were all part of as Christian move?

Uh the first two.

First two and then others were Army move?

Yeah.

Um any sort of life changing events that happened to you prior to coming to BUDS.

Nope, not really.

Nothing like the higher level?

Pretty average.

Tell me a little bit about your personality. What's that like and how is that contributed to getting through BUDS?

I would say I mean, since I've had to move around a lot, I mean, I've gotten pretty good at making friends really easily.

OK

Cause I leave them and then I make new ones. But I'm pretty social for the most part. But I'm really quiet sometimes. I get some pretty energetic in the mornings, a lot of guys get annoyed by that.

Hahaha. What led you to want to become a SEAL?

So initially like I always kind of knew. I didn't really know what like America was growing up in, like, little Eskimo village. I didn't really hear about a whole lot about the homeland, I guess.

Yeah.

And then when I moved to Central America, I didn't really know anything about America besides home schooling. What I learned uh in textbooks.

Yeah.

But then I was like, I have this great idea of bing like a soldier that's like cool to me. I don't know why. And then I saw, like, I kind of found out what it was about, like a trailer in a movie that I wasn't allowed to watch.

OK

So that's how kinda I found out about it.

How old were you when you kind of?

Like eight years old?

OK

So it kind of developed from there into something, obviously. It's like you're rocking the chair a little bit. That is kind of more romanticized. That's cool. It's still cool, but it's like. Yeeah now there's like a purpose behind it.

Yeah. And you said, so your dad join the army after you were born.

Yes. We were I was 10 years old.

OK

He joined the army, we moved to Hawaii. And that was our first and only duty station.

OK

So I spent kinda the more all my teenage years or still a teenager but spent more of its formative years there in Hawaii.

OK And how long and where do you go after Hawaii?

I went to Kansas City for nine months.

OK

And we finished high school. Yes, Virginia Beach for five years.

OK Anybody else? The military and your family or around you, your friends.

Yeah grandpa.

OK

And then great-grandpa

Were they Army or Navy?

Yeah, Army then one was a Marine.

OK

Great grandpa was Marine Corps in World War II. They don't really talk about it.

Yeah.

You know, I didn't really receive any influence for me.

OK Um what about your your childhood was specifically about like discipline.

Spankings.

Spanking? You're the first person that's answered that.

Really?

Yeah, I mean, other people have said that just just immediately you have an answer for me.

Yeah, spankings. We didn't do time out. I don't even know like. I mean, it guess it could be useful, but it's definitely there's something to be said about kids misbehaving, spank em, shake them up I guess.

Yeah.

Hahaha.

Do you think that helped?

I definitely think so. Obviously not in the moment. But looking back, I mean, respect the style of parenting.

Yeah.

Very. Not like strict strict parents but definitely like firm. You know, you're being a little naughty boy I mean obviously.

Um, what about. So we talked about you moving kind of throughout your childhood when you were like in Alaska. What were your ages for all these differen moves that you had.

So, Wyoming, I think, it was like when I spent my first year of life there.

OK.

Then turned five in Alaska.

OK.

Almost six moved to Central America, that is where my mom is from.

OK.

Grew up from like six to almost 11, almost 11 years old.

OK.

I mean, almost. Hawaii 10-11 to 17.

OK.

And then 18 I moved to Missouri.

Got it.

Or 18 in bootcamp.

In bootcamp ok. And so you did a high school and then went right to boot camp. Nothing in between.

Uh, I spent five months in Virginia.

Ok.

Just moving with my family.

OK

For me, it wasn't a lot of downtime.

Yeah. So you just graduated high school, went to Virginia Beach with them and then.

Left.

OK So when you finish high school, did you knew you were going to join the military?

Yes, Ma'am.

Um and what about during your teenage years? Did you do any sports or do any? Let's head back to this.

I surfed a lot in Hawaii a bit some competitive surfing. But not too much. I had, like, this dream of, like going pro, but obviously, like, it's not going to happen obviously.

Yeah.

But um, I played soccer and I don't know, I kind of heard. My buddy Swartz were talking about like, each sport he played was his favorite sport. Like I kind of switch interest a lot.

Yeah.

Things that I took an interest in, like surfing. I was like, oh, well, that's surfing. You know, when I started soccer. I'm like, OK, forget surfing I'm all about soccer. It's kind of like that. And that was the sport I played all the way through. And after, through high school.

OK Um anything about kind of being part of that sport that you think like as a team helped you here? Blend into the

Honestly, I would say no. Just cause like I feel like I didn't really play on like a team, whereas like I was rather good.

Yeah.

Uh, I played on it like a travel soccer team. Everyone comes from different schools. But you all come together.

Yeah.

To play and you're not like they were all pretty good friends but I was new to the team. So they have like as deep friendships.

Uh huh.

I was just there to play and we all pretty much love playing as one team. That was one thing we had in common. I don't know. Definitely nothing, really. I mean, here it is so much different.

In what way?

Just that, like, we're all actually like good friends.

Yeah.

More so, like instead of just we're just playing with the other like here it's like we're playing together. It's so like for reall.

Yeah.

We're bros. And friends outside of work. I mean the stakes are a lot higher obviously.

Yeah so we can we can talked about it but I'm just trying to make sure I'm clear. So if you think about the last five years of your life leading up to being here, so you had high school, Virginia Beach and then boot camp right? And then when did you go to boot camp?

So February 4th went boot camp.

Twenty nineteen?

2019

Uh so you're kind of one of the younger younger people here. Uh how do you think that played into your experience here?

I definitely think like right off the bat, you kinda have to earn the guys respect.

Yeah.

Especially, cause you're that younger, you kinda have to show up ok I'm I can't be immature and not just, you know. But we'll find games all the time.

Yeah.

You know, there's times when you have to turn that off enough. I always say like it's kind of like a dial, dial it on for work or turn it back. But I definitely think as like you go on and prove yourself that they perceive for like what what work you're capable of doing? Rather than your age and being like ok he's young and like you can't work hard. So, I mean, it kind of in first phase. It definitely was more of a hurdle. Cause like everyone's so new.

Yeah.

And then, as you know, now coming back from the island it's like, OK, I'm the same as him.

Yeah.

In all aspects.

Makes sense. How about do you consider yourself impulsive at all?

Yes.

In what ways?

Every way. No, haha.

Hahaha.

I would say one way that I really need to work on is I have a hard time saying no to people. So if I have plans to go do something and someone like, you know, you want to go do this and say yes to that right away without even thinking about it. Ok, I already have all these other plans that I said yes too. That's one way. I'm definitely like, it's a bad thing that I'm impulsive. So I've been trying to get my finances under wraps.

Yeah.

Which is definitely good to do at a younger age. But you know I've gotten away from impulsive buying.

Yeah. So you say that you have some impulsive buying, like.

Sometimes.

Purchases.

Yeah. It's just like food related stuff.

OK

Like I don't need to go eat out. Oh, there it is.

But not like going to buy a car or like.

I did buy a car after Hell Week that I needed to.

But it wasn't, yeah. It was something you needed. What about tattoos anything like that?

(intelligible)

Um, what do you think the most challenging component of BUDS was?

The gas.

The gas. What might've been that?

Got me through it?

Yeah.

It was that I couldn't breathe that I couldn't run away, no but uh I don't know. I guess I didn't really have to think about it. I was just going to be there.

Yeah.

It's not like I didn't have to think, like, OK, we're going to stay like it's. Everything else you can kinda just do but that's like something that we've never been exposed to. It was weird to go through something in here like something that'll make grown men scream in pain.

Yeah.

And like I don't know as I play something, even though it's so short, it's pretty intense.

Yeah, but you think like you got through it just by literally you're, you're not going to do anything else but get through it.

Yeah, I had no like second thoughts. Like think it's something I can do just another thing.

Anything else that you think was like you would top up there with the gas experience here at BUDS?

OC-8. I mean, getting rolled for that, definitely like there is a couple times, where I was like ok, can I do this? Yeah that I was kind of a little bump.

Yeah. What got you past that?

Definitely just taking the time to just put in work like hours of dirt diving.

OK

Through all these possible situations and then going into it confident. Cause it's really easy to be like I got rolled for this. This could send me home very easily. Just being confident when, you know there's no reason to be confident.

Anything, whether it was physical or mental or spiritual, that's in addition you thing got you through this BUDS experience in general?

I would say what I get from my girlfriend. Just that, you have a really strong relationship. Just being able to be like, OK, today was a bad day today sucked and if I can look forward to calling her and, you know, almost in a way like you're a baby a little bit.

Yeah.

It's kind of nice, almost even though, like, you know, we're all like whatever tough guys, I guess. But it's nice to be babied sometimes.

Yeah. Where is she?

She's in Florida.

OK

So it's been all long distance for a while.

Um, anytime you had to make a difficult decision here at BUDS like a ethical and moral decision, whether it was personal or watching somebody else maybe do something that wasn't enough.

Yeah, for sure. There's definitely like for a lot of ways that you can cheat here at BUDS like. And it's a lot of things like you have to be the man and be like, OK, I'm going to consciously make a decision not to do that. Like especially like staying out after curfew. I know like, and lying about certain things. Like here's one of the circumstances I'm not gonna name anything in particular. He's still actually in the program. And he had lied to one of the instructions about not having a vehicle when they were doing vehicle inspections. You know, he was my roommate at the time. And so I knew about it. And I did tell him either you're going to, like, say something and he had some contraband hidden in his car so I did like to tell the officers in the class, which I mean, like there's there's a certain point where it's like, okay, are you just kind of protecting the bad guys? Like yeah. You might have made it past Hell Week but or are you just harboring guys? Are you trying to protect those guys? Are you actually trying to do the right thing? Even if they did make it through Hell Week or whatever.

Yeah. So do you feel like was that a struggle to kind of decide what to do or do you feel like.

Not really.

Yeah.

I think the hardest thing was like confronting people because I'm such like I'm an easygoing guy. It's hard for me to sometimes talk about things that carry weight.

Yeah.

Like I'm not. I don't have a hard time being serious at work. But it's like, okay, I'm confronting this guy, so you go about differently. I mean, face to face it's a little bit harder.

Reality of it. Why do you think you were successful in completing BUDS?

Um, I don't know. Like finishing BUDS and being like successful, like conquering it. I feel are different in my mind.

Hahaha.

I struggled a lot. I told a lot of the instructors they were like, oh, good on you like making it through at 18 and I'm like, man, I. I was such a wuss at so many different things. I wish in hindsight I should have waited probably. But maybe just like I just never thought about quitting as an option.

Yeah.

It's really cliché to say but.

Why was quitting not an option for you.

Just because the guys are here and they're doing it like like why can't I? Like I don't want to let them down.

Yeah.

Another big thing and like, this is something I want to do. I really don't have to good of an answer for that.

No it's ok What are the, what do you think the differences between the people who have made it and the people that did quit, specifically the ones that quit.

Ok. um, so I think a lot of guys and I know this is not for everyone, but they lose desire for it.

OK

Or they didn't have the desire in the first place. Like, I know a lot of guys who had gotten rolled twice or once in they're like in that in-between period when you're not in it for a long time.

Yeah.

And you can lose desire for what you're doing. I know like getting rolled, I had to like reignite that flame.

Yeah.

And uh, but I know a lot of guys who. Also switching ideas, guys who didn't even want to do the job in the first place. A lot of guys just want to be a SEAL and not really do job because it is pretty. I mean, the further you go on you realize that it's so much more then. It's harder then, then just making it through Hell Week.

Yeah, there's a lot more to it.

Yep.

So how has this experience changed you as a person? If at all?

I feel like it's like coming into being a homeschooler, like kind of not being sheltered, like living in my own bubble.

Yeah.

It's definitely blinded my. My world view of like. Meaning so many different people. That helps me. Discern like, because I have beliefs and what I believe. And then, like, it's kind of putting that to the test.

Yeah.

On my own. You know, a lot of people can get swept away and like kind of just become an imprint of what their environment is. And so being able to stay alone. What you believe? Not even what you grew up believing but what you believe it's right. I didn't know that. It kinda was is a big lesson I had to learn. Be my own person not.

Yeah.

Being totally. Because there's a lot of peer pressure in life and decide that and grow up and be like yo, this what I'm about. This is what I'm about to do. This is what going to do. I think a lot of guys can respect me for that.

Yeah.

Just because, you know, even though I am really young. They see like. Ok he's about this. Even though they may not agree with it. They can still respect it.

And you think um because were you homeschooled your whole life?

For most of my life, I went to private Christian school for a little bit.

Do you think um that really played a role on that being kinda your own human being? Person?

A little bit. I mean, I was definitely like not a troublemaker. Definitely not a troublemaker. I just kinda like kinda do my own thing. Like free spirit.

Hahaha um anything else that I didn't ask, do you think he may help us with this study?

No, I'm not very qualified to talk about any of this, actually. I.

No you're great. You're perfectly qualified.

I'm just here because I don't know it's lot of luck too.

Yeah.

I think someone said I'm sure a lot have.

Yeah. A lot of people say that. Yeah. Ok well great I'm finished.

Thank you.

Thank you. Congratulations.

Thank you. I appreciate it