**TRANSCRIBER NAME: ENS Goldman**

**Date: 1/27/2022**

**Participant #: 606**

Interviewer (Code in blue): CDR Ledford

Participant (Code in black): #606

**CDR Ledford:**

**All right. Do you mind if I record this? This just helps for my notes.**

**606:**

**No problem.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So, today is January 4th, 2022. I'm with, um, 606 here, and this is Andrew Ledford. 606. All right, so, I'm gonna go through some questions. Um, just so start off, uh, what phase did you leave?**

**606:**

**First phase.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**You're in first phase.**

**606:**

**It was, uh, week two, day two.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**First phase, during week two. And how many weeks ago was that?**

**606:**

**Jesus. Must've been mid October, so [crosstalk]**

**CDR Ledford:**

**It was mid October?**

**606:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Wow. Really? Mid October.**

**606:**

**We've been sitting here for a while (laughs).**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Oh my gosh, dude. Uh, okay. So, and I'm gonna get to a little bit about mid October, um, in just a little bit. But at the beginning, um, can you tell me a little bit about your childhood? Like, did you guys move around a lot? Your parents all together?**

**606:**

**Yeah, so...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Siblings?**

**606:**

**Yeah, we moved around quite a bit. So my parents split up when I was five. And I'll try to talk slow so you can write it down. Um, but they both got along, uh, there was never like a fight of custody or anything like that. Um, so we pretty much bounced around apartment to apartment, uh, until sixth grade. Then my dad found a place, and I was there until high school. But before that, we probably lived in, jeez, 10 or 12 different, different places, um, just bouncing around. Mostly with my dad growing up. Uh, just a different relationship between the two. Um, let's see. I'll tell you all about the, uh...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**Uh, middle child of five. Um, only one full brother. The rest are half. So, uh, one older sister and then three brothers, and then like I said, one full and the rest are half.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**606:**

**Um, let's see. Pretty much normal thing. I mean, my dad grew up in Montana, so we had, like, a more, uh, conservative lifestyle, and we'd, we'd go on up hunting, fishing, um, stuff like that. My dad was a construction worker, so we were pretty much in his work truck our entire life just going to work with him, you know, learning that type of aspect.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**606:**

**So, it was a lot of, like, labor type stuff growing up. Not much, uh, video games (laughs), stuff like that.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**Um, let me see. So I, really young, played, like, soccer, uh, baseball. Tried football, but I was a really big kid and, uh, I ended up quitting because I was eight years old trying to play with 14 year olds. So I was, like, pretty, uh, not comfortable with...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**Not confident I guess is the best word. Um, then I got to high school and I did, uh, football and wrestling. Um, did really well in wrestling. I was varsity all four years. Uh, football, did the normal freshman year and then JV sophomore year and then varsity the next two years. Uh, and then let's see, after high school, I had gotten a little scholarship to wrestle at a community college in San Marcos, Palomar Community College and, uh, wrestled there for a summer. Um, didn't get any classes hardly that I wanted. They were kind of offering just, I mean, I can't even remember at this point. It was nothing worth, uh, pursuing. So I decided to move to Montana and attend a four year, uh, university. So I went to Montana State University. I tried out for the football team there, division I school up there.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**606:**

**Tried out twice. Um, first time, didn't make it. I was trying for linebacker, wasn't... I was always the biggest guy there, so I wasn't very fast, so they didn't take me then. The second tryout, I figured, really, they just weren't looking for anybody. It was, like, a 10 minute tryout and it was a little rainy and they're like, "Oh, sorry, it's cold. Come back next year." So, that's when I kind of figured out they're not even looking for anybody. They're just holding tryouts for, you know, whatever reason. So, from there, I just stuck with school.**

**606:**

**Uh, got my degree in mechanical engineering. Uh, didn't get the best grades 'cause I never liked school, I never was a good school person. Um, but it was about, I wanna say two to three ... Let's say two years in is when I kind of started looking into, like, military. Um, first choice I was interested in was the Nu Prop Program, the Nuclear Propulsion Officer Candidate Program. Um, didn't have the grades for it.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**606:**

**Also, a few people asked me how I would feel sitting in a submarine for six months at a time.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**And I thought, yeah, that doesn't seem too fun. (laughs)**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**So, I, uh, I kept searching in that, uh, military and, uh, that's when I saw SEALS, and I've always been, you know, big for athletic, I've always been able to, you know, pretty gifted in that aspect and, uh, the more I looked into it, the more it was, like, exactly what I thought, you know, I was, like, built for.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**606:**

**So, I, uh, I was even attending ... I didn't take the PSTs. I would just go watch. And I was talking to a recruiter. But, uh, I had to finish school first. That was priority. So finished school. Moved back here to California. I did a, uh, I was a project manager for an electrical company for a year and a half and pretty much that whole time I was just training, just getting prepared to, uh, start taking the PSTs and, uh, finally went to a recruiting office and, uh, all history from there. Finally got a contract and...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**When did you, uh, when did you start, like, wh-, when did you...**

**606:**

**Start training? For?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**For BUD/S?**

**606:**

**Uh, the training part, I mean, I ... That was a few years ago, but ... So, my first day of bootcamp was May 24th. That's when I started going in. But it took me five months. I was on my last month to get a contract because of my scores. So these days, you know, they don't accept anything other than [inaudible] scores.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**And that's the ... I- I'm sure you know about the scores.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**Yeah. So, I had issues with, like, the, um, the sit ups and the run. That was my ... So, I'm just slowly building on that.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So, that was May 24th of this last year?**

**606:**

**That's when I started bootcamp. So I got my contract in February of...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay.**

**606:**

**2021.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Got a contract to come here.**

**606:**

**Yep.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**And when did you start, like, first phase?**

**606:**

**First phase was ... Let me see. So, BO- ... We got here September 17th, so we started BO the 20th. That was the first day of BO. Then three weeks.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, so maybe, end of September?**

**606:**

**Yeah, end of September. Early October.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**End of September. Got it.**

**606:**

**In BUD/S, you don't really remember time much. (laughs)**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**Cool.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**If you had to describe your personality in three traits, how would you describe it?**

**606:**

**Um, let's see. I'd say selfless. Um, a, uh, it's like a good way or a bad way? Both? Trying to think. Um, personality. I'd say loyal. Then maybe, uh, maybe a little impatient.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Impatient.**

**606:**

**Say I give you a, a critic, criticize. (laughs)**

**CDR Ledford:**

**That's good. So I think you just, you answered with that first part. Uh, what have you done in the last five years prior to training? Um, you answered that pretty well. But if you're looking at those prior experiences, what, if any, might you describe as life-shaping experiences?**

**606:**

**Life-shaping?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**What-...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Like what changed your life? What put... What, uh... If you're looking back through all these experiences, what are... Are there any experiences that, like, wow, that really molded me, like that changed me?**

**606:**

**Yeah, I would say, um, is owning a business. So I, one summer, uh, didn't get a job for a while. I was working on a ranch. Um, not very important. But I came back to home in Busby, Montana, and uh, was looking around for jobs and found a painting company. And just painted for the summer. Turns out the company was a franchise company. So long story short, uh, they gave me a three-part interview, and I ended up actually owning the franchise. So for two years, I owned that franchise, and uh...**

**606:**

**That was something I knew I could do, but it was something... I'd say previously I didn't really get good grades in school, so almost anything I did at that level, people always questioned it. Because they automatically think you don't have good grades, you're not going to amount to anything. So for me, I took that as, like, a challenge, but also, you know, I was, uh, blind going into it. Never owned a business, so um... That really helped with just confirming a lot that I thought about myself. That's why, one reason I said selfless on there because I had 15 employees. Um, I ran... So everything with that company, it was, you have your specific terms, so just typically like a city that you ran.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**Because there was multiple people. So I did, uh, two different cities. One was in Helena. The other was in Butte. And I lived in Bozeman. Each were, um, 80 miles away from each other. So it was like a triangle. So really, I was the estimator, the salesman. You know, I took care of the guys. I went and got the material. Um, talked to the customer. I was literally everything other than the painter. And even that, I did every now and then. Just because you have to.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**But that, I mean, I really kind of saw, like, I had zero time for myself. I mean, I was working well over 100 hours a week. Um, sleep in my car constantly, just because. Every now and then, I'd get done doing stuff at, like, 11 o'clock and, you know, home's two hours away. It's like, well, I'll get more sleep if I sleep in my car, so... (laughs) But, uh, I mean, with my guys, uh, you know, I had a lot of incidences where money was tight. You know, I was in college, too, so basically I was taking jobs, completing the jobs, and it was going straight to my guys. And I would take nothing. And that's... I mean, I did that all summer long. It was just a constant-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**Chasing the train, you know? Just like, hey, here you go. Here you go. Um, so that's where most of that happened. You know, and uh, I had very low retention, or what would you call it? The opposite of retention. Um, I didn't let guys go very often. Um, I actually kept people around. I actually had one of my guys get hired to own his own franchise, uh, the first year.**

**606:**

**So, but really, that's how I've always been. I like taking care of people. That's my number one priority, and that's why I thought I'd be a good team guy.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. So I think that covered, uh, describing your background, uh, that led you to join the Navy. Um, what motivates you on a daily basis?**

**606:**

**Um, I like to give back. That was always the, uh, the mindset I've always had, and one reason why I joined the military.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**606:**

**Um, I like to serve people. Um, help people out as much as I can. Um, you know, and I've, I've always just wanted to make some sort of difference. At first when you're younger, it's difference in the world. But um, now I'm more mature, it's just more about making a difference in something everyday whether it's your community, a person next to you, taking a piece of trash, anything. Um, that's what I've always strived for when I've looked for jobs or, you know, future careers, is what's going to make an impact to, you know, make positive change, you know, anything.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**And that's what I've always... You know, that's, that's what I look for.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Awesome. For um, six, describe your experience at BUD/S. Talking about in first phase.**

**606:**

**It was, uh, it was brutal. Um, all in all, it was... I had fun with it. Uh, it was very cold. It was pretty cold. Um, one thing with our class that we did not have was, there was no teamwork. There was not very much teamwork. And that's one reason why-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Hmm.**

**606:**

**We only had 13 make it through hell week. Um...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**And what BUD/S class is this?**

**606:**

**351.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**351. Yeah.**

**606:**

**Yeah. So kind of what happened is when we were in bootcamp, I was in the group that didn't get their vaccine early enough. So we were in the two week quarantine. Whereas the other group of guys... So we were all originally, right, shipped off the same time, be in the same BUD/S class. Uh, but when they separated at bootcamp, what they decided to do was, the guys that started bootcamp two weeks prior were going to class up first. They're going to be 351. The rest of us that did the, uh, two week quarantine, and then eight weeks, we're going to 352.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Hmm.**

**606:**

**That's what they're starting next Monday. What they did... So we... I was 352 originally. Uh, we had two or three weeks of prep, and then they decided the 351 class was too small. So they took, um, the ABCs. Last name ABC are going to class up with 351. So Blackwell-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Very interesting.**

**606:**

**Um, so that's kind of what happened. We really didn't... There was a lot of, like, head butt with the two classes. I don't know why that was a thing. Um, they even, you know, that 351 class had it with each other, we noticed, being in the 352. But, but yeah, so when we went in, I mean, I had a very small group of friends that, you know, we kind of stuck together. But as BUD/S goes, you can't stay all together. Not at all times.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**So um, how I DORed is running boat the second day of week two. I was with a completely new boat crew. Um, boat crews got switched up a little bit. I was the tallest guy in there.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Hmm.**

**606:**

**And holding up a lot of the boat, and being such a big guy, couldn't keep up with the pace. Immediately, within 100 yards, it was the whole boat crew screaming at you. Telling you to quit. Telling you you don't belong here. You'll never be in our boat crew again. The whole night. So basically, I took that as a team that didn't want me around. So that's what made me make this decision.**

**606:**

**Um, but to describe BUD/S in itself, I didn't think it was too tough because I knew looking into it what it was going to be. Um, yeah, it... The biggest thing was just the lack of teamwork, which I think comes from class to class. I don't think that's something BUD/S is designed to be. I think that was just our class. But it was nothing that surprised me. Um, it was all pretty straightforward. I mean, it was exactly what people said it was. Did that kind of answer that?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. No, that's perfect. Um, was there a time you had to make a difficult decision during BUD/S?**

**606:**

**Uh, I think-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**That you had to make a diff-, difficult decision during BUD/S? Yeah.**

**606:**

**Um, I mean, you had the DOR. So that was tough.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. Yeah. And is that something that under the boat, like, that's the first time you started thinking about it? Or...**

**606:**

**I didn't even... No, I mean, I didn't think about it. Um, so I made it halfway through that, that particular evolution, and the instructors pulled me out. And uh, they were all talking to me, telling me obviously I should go. (laughs) And the whole time they were talking to me, I wasn't even looking at them. I was looking at the boat crew. And that's who I was thinking about the whole time. I was thinking, you know, if I pull these guys back, I shouldn't be here. And that's what I kept telling myself.**

**606:**

**You know, uh, didn't have an issue with hardly anything else. I mean, I failed the four miles, but so did over half the class in one particular one. But that was the only time that I actually was struggling. And everybody struggles in BUD/S.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**606:**

**But, you know, that particular time, it was like, immediately, you don't belong here. Was kind of what, you know... Instructor's one thing. But when it's the other, your teammates saying that, it's like...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**So that was the difficult decision of, like, you know, let those guys, you know, handle it.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Hmm, okay. Um, is there anything that you would have done differently?**

**606:**

**Probably training. Definitely would have ran more. Uh, would have focused more on losing some weight. (laughs) But as far as BUD/S goes, being in it, I wouldn't have changed anything because unfortunately the only people that made it were the ones who were, like, the savages. Cutthroat. And I don't think that's the way it should have been.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Hmm.**

**606:**

**So, I wouldn't have changed the way I was, you know, because I was... I, yeah, I did everything I could for people. I mean, I was a big guy, so we'd get... Be doing buddy carries. And I'd carry people the entire time. You know, I never let anybody carry me once. Uh, but I think that's how BUD/S should be is you... You take care of the people who are struggling at one thing, and when you're struggling in the next thing, vice versa, you know?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**People take care of you. But as far as BUD/S goes, I mean, I wouldn't change anything. Um...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Are you, are you interested in coming back?**

**606:**

**I am. Yeah. My only concern is having that happen again.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Hmm.**

**606:**

**Because I wasn't the only one. It was...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**There was a hundred people out there that were having the same exact experience. But I'd say yes, because the dream is still there. And...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**606:**

**Uh, I think that brotherhood is there. It's just [crosstalk]**

**CDR Ledford:**

**What practices, um... Did you use any practices to kind of, to push you through challenges? Any physical, spiritual, mental practices?**

**606:**

**Nothing that could be labeled. Um, I had a fairly difficult childhood, uh, just with, um, family members, you know, with Mom. So I've been dealing with adversity my entire life. So you know, when I... When things don't go my way, or difficult situations, I really... It doesn't phase me at all. It doesn't really, uh, get into my head at all. Um, so I don't really have something where I need to, uh, you know, breathe or you know, prepare mentally. I mean, I, I... Everything was just kind of like, you know, it is what it is. Happens all the time. Whatever. Keep moving. But I can elaborate on the childhood stuff if you need me to, I mean...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Uh, I think we got it.**

**606:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. How do you think this experience changed you as a person?**

**606:**

**It made me, uh, think I could go a lot farther than what you thought you could. Um, you can deal with a lot more pain and physicality. You know, you can push beyond what you thought you could do. Um, yeah, I think that's about it. I think that's about all you get for first phase. (laughs)**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Awesome. All right. Those were the, uh, those were all my questions. Uh, do you have any questions for us?**

**606:**

**I don't.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Anything? No?**

**606:**

**No.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**All right. I'm going to stop recording.**