**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Brendan Reilly**

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**Participant #: 671**

Interviewer (Code in blue): Dr. Celeste Raver Luning

Participant (Code in black): #671

Celeste: This is Celeste Raver Luning. It is January 6th 2022, and I'm here with participant 671. First question for you is, what was your last BUD/S class?

671: My last BUD/S class was 351.

Celeste: Okay. And what was your first BUD/S class?

671: 349.

Celeste: Okay, so did you do 350? Or were you .

671: I skipped 350, and was enrolled in 51.

Celeste: Okay. And then, what phase did you leave both of those classes?U

671: Uh first phase.

Celeste: First phase. And how many weeks ago did you leave 351?

671: Weeks from today?

Celeste: Yeah, or approximate timeline, even if it's like...

671: Um honestly, I'm not too sure. It's kind of a... Whatever the first week of first days was.

Celeste: Okay, so like October?

671: October-ish, right.

Celeste: Yeah.

671: I think early October.

Celeste: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your childhood. Brothers, sisters, where you grew up.

671: I have a younger brother. Grew up in uh Connecticut, Fairfield County. Um.

Celeste: Okay. Always live there?

671: Always lived there. Um I was in, We were in one house in Ridgefield, Connecticut, and I don't remember moving. I was too young.

Celeste: No.

671: But we moved to another house in Ridgefield, so I've been in Ridgefield my whole life. Um when I was, after college, I moved to a different city in Connecticut, with actually a buddy of mine, who's here, as well, um. And I lived there for a year.

Celeste: Okay.

671: And then I came out of here.

Celeste: Sports in high school?

671: No sports in high school um.

Celeste: Okay. What other types of things did you do?

671: Um I actually uh skateboarded.

Celeste: Okay.

671: So I was skateboarding through high school and middle school. Um and then I played rugby in college.

Celeste: Okay.

671: And swam.

Celeste: Where did you go to college?

671: Western Connecticut University. It was in Danbury, Connecticut.

Celeste: Okay. What did you study there?

671: Marketing.

Celeste: Okay. If you were to describe your personality through traits, how would you describe it?

671: Um I would say honest, um outgoing, confident um and just kind.

Celeste: Okay. So talk to me about the last five years of your life, prior to coming to BUD/S.

671: Um so again, I was in college. Um I found out what I wanted to do when I was in college, so I made it my goal. Um finished college, then I moved. I actually joined a program that trained for this. I met my friend there. And I was in that program for two years, and we decided to move to an apartment to be closer to that program after a year, and just this was the main focus.

Celeste: Okay.

671: This was all I had thought about. This was everything.

Celeste: Oh.

671: And then came out here um.

Celeste: Okay.

671: But you know I had a full-time job. And I was working like 60 hours a week while I was training for this. Not making very much money. Didn't really-

Celeste: What were you doing?

671: I was actually manufacturing revolvers, pistols um.

Celeste: Okay.

671: So that was it was hard work, but it didn't really matter because I was doing what I wanted to do. I was just working, and then right after work you'd go to the gym for four or five hours, come back home, sleep. Rinse and repeat. So I didn't really mind it. I just liked getting in the feeling of waking up at 4:30 in the morning and working until late night and then going to the gym. I think it benefited me a lot.

Celeste: Yeah. Any kind of life shaping crucible type experiences prior to coming to BUD/S?

671: I don't think so.

Celeste: Yeah.

671: I always thought about that and I really... I always had it pretty easy going.

Celeste: No.

671: Never really had any issues.

Celeste: Anything that you think factored or played a part in your training?

671: Um how so? What do you mean?

Celeste: I guess, maybe one question is why SEALs?

671: I always thought about this. I remember in college, I remember watching the BUD/S 234 video on YouTube early on, way before college. And I was like, "Oh, that's interesting." And then I never really came back to it. And my brother actually had joined. He was at ROTC at UConn for the Army, so I was like, "Oh, maybe the military does sound cool." And then had a look, and I'd watch the video again. Then I was just like, right when I saw that video I just was hooked. I was reading all the books and stuff, and then... I I guess, I just really never had a goal until then, and I was like, "Okay, this is definitely what I want to do."

Celeste: Huh?

671: Yeah.

Celeste: So Navy's was about SEALs. Anything-

671: Yeah, just SEALs.

Celeste: Okay.

671: I didn't have any other thought on my mind.

Celeste: No. Any family in military other than brother in ROTC?

671: Uh No.

Celeste: Okay.

671: My grandpa was in the Navy for like a couple of months then he got out.

Celeste: Okay. What motivates you on a daily basis?

671: I think just the next step of what I'm going to do. Right now it's, my new job is I rescue.

Celeste: Okay.

671: And that's what I'm focused on right now, is doing well in that school.

Celeste: Okay.

671: And completing that school.

Celeste: That's at Pensacola?

671: That's in Florida, yeah.

Celeste: Yeah?

671: Mm-hmm.

Celeste: Okay. When do you leave for that?

671: I actually just found out yesterday, it's late February.

Celeste: Okay.

671: February 25th, so I've got some time.

Celeste: Yeah. How about talk to me about your experience at BUD/S? So obviously, you were in 649 first, and then 651. Talk to me about that whole experience.

671: I've had some time to think about this, so I think it was uh the class dynamic of 349 was um was um like exceptionally better than 51.

Celeste: Yeah?

671: Um but the thing was with 349, I made it right up until hell week, then the day before hell week, then I got rolled out because I failed the drown proofing.

Celeste: Okay.

671: I think since I was training non-stop for a year, like that was the only thing I was doing, was training for two years. And then you go into bootcamp and prep, and then you go bow and then you come out here, you're always... My mind was always locked on. Nothing else mattered. You would just stay locked on. It was a weird feeling. And there was not even a thought about quitting. That had never entered my mind in 349 once.

Celeste: Yeah.

671: Um And the class was great. The officers were on top of their game. It was insane. I would say, one of the better classes I've seen since I've been here. And then I got rolled out of that class, and then it was just like a switch. It was like everything was turned off. I didn't have to worry about anything. I just sat in my room and just recovered from what just happened. And I think the switch turned off in my head.

Celeste: Yeah.

671: And then once 51 hit, I think I was only there to try and do what I did again, if that makes sense. I mean, I didn't have that drive anymore. I really didn't have the motivation. I didn't even want to be there since... From the day we started, I was trying to get out of things. I was trying to sneak everything.

Celeste: Yeah.

671: But not in the other class. 49 was like, I wanted to be there really badly. That was that sucked. That was the switch, I think, getting rolled out of that first class. And then just being here for a while, like it takes a toll on you.

Celeste: No. So with 351, you said the dynamic was different. Talk to me about that dynamic.

671: Um well, compared to 349, the leadership was an unbelievable difference. 49 was, we had I think like 10 naval academy officers. We had all of them, almost every single officer... I'm pretty sure every officer was a roll back.

Celeste: In 349?

671: In 349. So we had naval academy roll back officers, which is unheard of. It's just so much experience in leadership, that you're always locked on. There was no mistakes being made. And the class wasn't eating at each other. It wasn't any of that. It was like just pure professionalism. It was great. And then this class coming up, 51 was, we had one naval academy officer, I think, or I think it was a... Yeah, I think one naval academy officer we had. All the rest of the officers, I don't even think went to SOAS. I think it was the Zoom, the Zoom Officers, I think that played a big role. And the leadership, I don't know, it just wasn't... I mean, it was there, but it wasn't there to the extent of the 49 officers. Everybody had a voice in 49, but here there was just one voice. And that voice, I don't think was very well respected, so I didn't I didn't really see… There wasn't a lot of uh, like if you messed up in 49, if you made a mistake, you were going to hear about it and you were going to pay for it. But in 51, it was pretty lax, so things weren't getting done that needed to be done. Small things. And they weren't emphasized. Um I don't think anybody really knew what was about to happen.

Celeste: No.

671: Like new guys coming in, really didn't know what this was all about. And everybody's laughing and joking, but it's like, "Okay. Day one starts soon. Let's just see how many people are laughing then." I don't think the emphasis was on how crazy it really was going to get.

Celeste: Yeah. Oh. So tell me a time you had to make a difficult decision here at BUD/S. Walk me through that experience.

671: Well, quitting.

Celeste: Oh.

671: I wanted to quit from before we even started 51. Like when we were-

Celeste: Yeah. Did you have to do BO again? You don't have to do BO again, right?

671: No, we did.

Celeste: Okay, so you did BO gun?

671: Definitely. I think we were the last class. BO was fun. Bow was easy. It's just one evolution a day, but the... You start. So Monday morning, I remember it was uh... What was that holiday? Was it Martin Luther King Day? Columbus Day?

Celeste: Columbus Day in October.

671: Columbus Day. We were all wondering if we were going to have off. The day off. We thought they were pump faking us, so I just remember praying we had that day off. And I wasn't really like excited like I was day one of 49. And I just remember, before we even started, I just was like, "I don't even want to do this." And I lasted three days, and I finally called it quits. We were in the ocean, and I was just like, "I don't..." It was super cold. I just was like, "Nah, I don't want to do this anymore."

Celeste: Yeah.

671: I told the instructor. I think I was just rationalizing thoughts in my head. Like, "Oh, what can I do instead of this?"

Celeste: Anything you would have done differently in BUD/S?

671: Yeah. Practice my water competency, so I hadn't failed that first thing that got me rolled. Also, don't try and avoid anything.

Celeste: No.

671: Like like leading up to BUD/S, like it bow, I'd go into musters and like you try and avoid stuff to do tasking and stuff. Just I'd involve myself in my class as much as possible and really get to know people. Yeah, yeah. And just don't try and snake anything. Just do everything that you're told and yeah, you'll be good.

Celeste: Oh. So what practices, physical, mental, spiritual, do you use to push through challenges, if any?

671: I'd say, just laughing through things.

Celeste: Yeah?

671: A lot of times, when it really sucked, you just were at lunch or breakfast or dinner, and you're just laughing with your friends about like, "Oh, my God. That really sucked." Um.

Celeste: Yeah.

671: But that, that was funny. Another thing was like, make it like a competition. Make it a competition between you and your friend. Like, "Oh, what was your time on that run?" And like make fun of him, if he lost to you or something. Just try and crack jokes, or like make it, just make it about winning.

Celeste: Yeah.

671: Don't try and get through it. Just try and win everything, because at that point, if you're thinking about winning, you're never going to think about quitting.

Celeste: Has this experience changed you as a person, if at all?

671: I think it not only humbled me, but it made me rationalize more about certain things I want to do. There's a lot more that goes into everything than you see from an outside perspective. You know?

Celeste: Yeah.

671: Like BUD/S, you only hear stories from friends or something. You don't really know until you get here. So I think it just makes you think more about your decisions, about what you want to do with goal setting going forward.

Celeste: Yeah.

671: So yeah.

Celeste: Anything that I didn't ask, that you think is worth sharing?

671: No.

Celeste: Okay. Great. I'm going to turn these off.