**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Brendan Reilly**

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**Participant #: 675**

Interviewer (Code in blue): Dr, Patti Clubmiles

Participant (Code in black): #675

Patti: So, my name's Patti Clubmiles and I'm here today interviewing participant number 675.

Patti: So, first can you please give me your participant number?

675: 675.

Patti: Okay, so once you have that, I'm going to ask you these questions. I'm going to start with questions about your childhood and we'll work our way towards BUD/S.

675: Okay.

Patti: The first thing I'd like to know is if you could tell me about your family. So, your parents, your siblings, where you grew up, if you moved, played sports, that kind of stuff.

675: Okay. Yeah. Um I'm the oldest of four.

Patti: Okay.

675: Grew up in Noblesville, Indiana my whole life. Um never moved out of it. Um parents grew up kind of poor. Just a small town in Indiana um but they're both pretty successful.

675: So, I grew up in a upper middle class family. Uh went to Catholic school my whole life. After going to high school I went to Purdue, uh studied to be a physician's assistant there um and then started doing this.

Patti: So did you finish at Purdue?

675: Yes and no. It's kind of touchy.

675: Nah, it's not touchy but I had one class left but I had already started the enlistment process my senior year when I found out I failed my last class-

Patti: Oh.

675: ... so I was shipping out in 20 days so I didn't really have a chance to to redeem that I guess.

Patti: Right, but you can always go back and take your one class.

675: Yeah.

Patti: Be done with it.

675: Yeah.

Patti: That's not a big deal. Yeah.

Patti: Okay so, then that said, if you think about your five years prior to coming here... I don't know exactly when you got here so if you can tell me when you started basic training and then the five years before that.

675: All right.

Patti: What did you do and what made you think about becoming a SEAL?

675: Okay. Yeah. Um I went to bootcamp in May and then-

Patti: Ah, it's-

675: ... 351 has made the. Or, 21.

Patti: Okay.

675: And then the five years prior, I was going to school um and then I guess the fifth year would be my senior year of high school, and then-

Patti: Oh, so you went in May of 2021. The year you graduated from college.

675: Yes. So I graduated-

Patti: Oh, okay.

675: Or, didn't technically graduate but graduation was May 16th and I shipped out the 26th or something like that.

Patti: Oh, okay.

675: Pretty quick turnaround

Patti: So really right away.

675: Yeah.

Patti: Okay. And so then when in your college time did you say, "Oh, I think I'll become a SEAL."?

675: Oh, I decided it in eighth grade, so I was pretty set on it for a while. I was going to do it after I graduated high school and then got talked into going to college, um but it was on ... it was always my plan.

Patti: And what was it that made you decide you wanted to be a SEAL?

675: I think just I always knew I wanted to do something in the military. Kind of had a sense of duty from a young age, so I always knew I wanted to do something in the military. Grew up wanting to be like be a marine.

675: I feel like most young men see the cool uniforms and stuff in movies and want to be-

Patti: Right.

675: ... a marine. And then was attracted to the SEAL teams once I found out what it was and knew um found out more about special operations and their mission set, and learning that it was the best of the best and how difficult it was to get into it and everything so that really attracted me.

Patti: Okay. And then when you were in college, did you play any sports there or?

675: I didn't play sports in college. I played lacrosse, football, wrestling, uh and basketball, in high school.

Patti: Okay. You're about the fifth person who's been a lacrosse player.

675: Really?

Patti: Don't think I've ever met one before but-

675: Really?

Patti: ... in the last couple days I meet all these-

675: Wow. Yeah.

Patti: ... lacrosse players. It's kind of cool. But you did not play lacrosse at Purdue, you just-

675: No.

Patti: ... focused on your studies and-

675: Yeah.

Patti: Okay. So, you said that you everybody wants to be in the military or whatever but did you meet somebody? Did you have someone in your family? Did you see a movie?

675: No.

Patti: You just...

675: Yeah, kind of just decided on my own. Kind of weird. No one in my family's in the military so I didn't really have anyone to talk to about it, but um I think probably books influenced me a lot, and I read a lot when I was little.

Patti: And so you wanted to join the SEALs and become a SEAL right out of high school but somehow you ended up in college?

675: Yeah.

Patti: Your parents or what made you-

675: Yes.

Patti: ... make that change?

675: Yes. Yeah, my parents pushed me towards school. They said... Um I don't really know why I listened to them. It's not like they were paying for anything. Still got $40,000 in debt but um uh yeah, they basically wanted me to try out college um so I said I'd try it for a semester and I ended up joining a fraternity and finding all these good friends and everything, so I stuck it out for four years. And I saw the value in it.

Patti: Yeah. Right. Totally. Yeah, yeah, yeah. For sure.

Patti: Okay, and so then what would you say motivated you on a daily basis? Like, why? Why do you get out of bed in the morning, and specifically why did you get out of bed in the morning to come to BUD/S?

675: Initially I thought it was um just striving to do something great with my life.

Patti: Right.

675: But since dropping, kind of come to the realization to myself that I think I do a lot of things to, I don't know. Almost, I guess for my ego almost, to live up to what I think of myself and I guess since dropping, I'm realizing that I do a lot of things, um and what motivates me is to not embarrass myself I guess. Make sense.

Patti: Yeah. Yeah. Totally does. So, taking that a little bit further, now knowing what you know now, what are some of the traits that you might use to describe yourself?

675: Gosh. Hate this question. I don't know.

Patti: Doesn't have to be related to BUD/S. I mean like-

675: Yeah.

Patti: You know.

675: I like to think I'm honest and compassionate but also, I don't know. I guess you could say egotistical based on my last answer.

Patti: Yeah. Well, I mean, I don't know if that's the best word but yeah.

675: Yeah.

Patti: You care what other people think about you and-

675: Yeah. Yeah, I don't know.

Patti: Okay. And so then now tell me a little bit about what happened in BUD/S and what's your story? Where-

675: Yeah.

Patti: Like, when did you stop? Why? What happened?

675: It was actually something that it's the only part of the whole process that's given me a little bit of clarity. Um so, I dropped the after... Not after breakfast but we had evolution after breakfast on Monday of week two-

Patti: Okay.

675: Um ... and what made me drop was a girlfriend of three-and-a-half years that I planned on marrying and having a life with and everything, and kind of come to the realization that there is not much of a life to be had together if I had continued through the pipeline.

Patti: Really?

675: Mm-hmm.

Patti: So you said, "I'm done."?

675: Yeah.

Patti: Okay.

675: Pretty much.

Patti: So it wasn't any evolution, swim, SIPE, all those other terrible-

675: No.

Patti: ... diseases that you get here.

675: No. I didn't fail a single evolution, didn't get called out for anything, didn't screw over any of my buddies, didn't get eaten out by the class. Yeah.

Patti: You just woke up on that Monday morning after breakfast and said, "This is just not the life I want."?

675: Kind of, yeah. I think telling myself it didn't have anything to do it but I mean, I had so many phone calls with my girlfriend and I don't want to blame it on her but-

Patti: Yeah. Well, it's okay.

675: ... we have conversations and started realizing. I don't know, you kind of have to prioritize you know and I had talked a bunch to one of my buddies who's made it through, he's a SEAL team 8, and talked to him a lot. We'd gone to high school together and planned on doing this together forever.

Patti: But he actually went in right out of high school and you went to college?

675: He dropped out in college and-

Patti: Okay.

675: ... pursued this and made it through.

Patti: Okay.

675: And I just had a lot of conversations with him about life in the teams, um marrying and, you know. Everybody says the divorce rate's so high you can't do it, and I always told myself, "I'm going to be fine." You ... You know.

Patti: Right.

675: "I'll make it work." And started realizing that that wouldn't be true.

Patti: Now, is your friend married?

675: No.

Patti: Or he just-

675: No, he's, you know, sees what it's like. Yeah.

Patti: Yeah. I think it can be challenging.

675: Yeah.

Patti: You know. I don't know. I know there are people that are married and it's worked out but I don't know. I suspect it is... I know the divorce rate is definitely higher. So, when you were here at BUD/S, can you tell me a little bit more about some of the difficult decisions that you were grappling with? It sounds like this one here about the life of a BUD/S person or a SEAL.

675: Yeah.

Patti: Anything else that were difficult decisions for you?

675: While I was out here?

Patti: Mm-hmm.

675: I mean, that was really the only really, really, really difficult decision. Other than that, you're... You know. When you're in BUD/S, you're living evolution to evolution, moment by moment. There's not, there's honestly not much decision to be made. Everything's made for you.

Patti: Well, yeah, but I mean like within your boat crews and other people-

675: Oh.

Patti: ... and dealing with them and-

675: Sure. Yeah. I mean, boat crews is definitely a big decision just because your success and evolutions almost determines your fate um-

Patti: Yeah.

675: ... day to day and week by week, and ultimately in BUD/S, so that was something that... Yeah. I mean, I guess that was a daily decision, choosing who you want to be with that day and picking guys who you knew were strong dudes.

Patti: So were you in 351?

675: Yes.

Patti: So did you guys have a female in your group?

675: Yes we did.

Patti: And how did that go?

675: It didn't look like well. I don't know. She was never in my boat crew um.

Patti: Okay. So she didn't ever have her... You didn't ever have to make a decision about being in her-

675: No, I honestly-

Patti: ... boat crew or not.

675: … never interfaced with her-

Patti: Okay.

675: ... ever, just because she was in a different boat crew and the class started so big, you know, you don't have-

Patti: No. Yeah.

675: You don't have time to get to know everyone. But um-

Patti: Yeah, I just ask because you were a little bit on the smaller side and I know that they [inaudible 00:11:21] you up by-

675: Height lines, yeah.

Patti: By height, right, because they don't want to have a 6'5" guy and a-

675: Right.

Patti: ... 5'2" guy in the same boat, so I just-

675: Right.

Patti: ... thought maybe that there might've been-

675: Yeah, she was quite a bit shorter than me.

Patti: ... some interaction.

675: ... actually. She was probably like 5'1" but she was in the Smurf crew.

Patti: Oh, okay. She was what?

675: In the Smurf crew. It's-

Patti: What's that?

675: ... the shortest guys.

Patti: The shortest guys.

675: Yeah. The Smurfs and the giants.

Patti: The Smurf crew. Oh wow. That's kind of cute.

Patti: Okay, if you had to do all over again, would you do something different about all this?

675: Um no. I mean, probably not have a girlfriend going through but I don't regret that. I mean, I still plan on having a life with her and everything.

Patti: Right. Right.

675: Like I said, that's providing me some clarity but I don't know, the great debate right now is doing steroids or not doing steroids.

Patti: Right.

675: I think it's... Unethical is not the right term but for lack of a better term, unethical.

Patti: Did you know of guys doing steroids while you were in BUD/S?

675: Yeah.

Patti: And then was that a difficult decision for you to decide if you should say anything or not?

675: Oh, to say anything?

Patti: Mm-hmm.

675: No, I honestly never thought about saying anything, um but honestly it's not going to improve them and they're not going to change their mind-

Patti: Yeah.

675: ... and even if they did, who knows if they'll even be around tomorrow.

Patti: I know what...

Patti: Was it a lot of people? Like, did you meet...

675: So-

Patti: Like, you knew people?

675: In-phase and prior, I'd always heard about it. It was kind of like this boogeyman, you know? Uh and then didn't see it firsthand until things started getting pretty bad in-phase, and um then once getting out, then I, it was like, "Okay, now we're out. People can say things about it openly." And just found out about so many guys doing it, which is pretty surprising. A lot of my friends that I thought were... I don't want to say I thought were good guys. They're still good guys.

Patti: Yeah, yeah. They're still good guys.

675: They were doing what they had to do but-

Patti: Just made a different choice.

675: Yeah, guys that I wouldn't have thought would be using something.

Patti: Wow, yeah. And how do you even get them?.

675: Yeah, I don't know. either.

Patti: I'm so naïve. I mean, I don't know.

675: I don't know either.

Patti: So, do you think that when you were going through BUD/S, did you do any mindfulness or spiritual meditation kind of practices to help you get through the difficulty or?

675: Um ... Never… I mean, at night I would try the big thing to do with hope. Talk... Sorry, talk about, is visualization. I would try and visualize positive self-talk but I uh… I don't know. Meditating at the end of the day when you have 45 minutes to sleep, it was kind of the last thing on my mind honestly. I just wanted to sleep.

Patti: [inaudible 00:14:17] couldn't meditate if we wanted to-

675: Yeah, honestly.

Patti: You'd be too tired. You just fall asleep.

675: Yeah. True. So, I would try that.

Patti: But try that.

675: Not try it but, you know, I was familiar with doing it through sports and-

Patti: So when you were sitting in the water and you're freezing cold, how did you get through that?

675: I would always try and laugh in the beginning. So, surf torture broken down into three or four iterations, so the first iteration I would always try and talk with the guy next to me and makes the time pass, um and then after that usually the talking stops and you're really cold. That, I would always... My mom always told me, "Look up." Because we were doing it at night a lot. She would tell me look at the stars and she'd be looking at the same stars so-

Patti: Aw.

675: ... I'd look at that, yeah.

Patti: Wow. I didn't think it would be so hard. Okay, and speaking of cold, it's cold in here. What about, did you feel like your class liked you and you were a part of, you know-

675: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Patti: ... a well... Okay.

675: I did, yeah. That's something I miss a lot actually.

Patti: Yeah. Right. And then now do you feel stuck or do you feel like you're ready to go on and?

675: Yeah, I don't even know how I feel right now. It's like a weird limbo. I'd like to have something else to focus on and point my life at, but also right now I'm getting paid to surf, pretty much, so I'd be stupid to want... I don't know.

Patti: Well, I know but you still kind of want to know what-

675: Yeah.

Patti: So do you have your job sheet yet or whatever that-

675: I did get my job sheet.

Patti: And what do you… Do you have a job picked out?

675: I picked out CTI-

Patti: What is that?

675: ... which is an interpreter. They send you to language school and you learn a new language and interpret it, intelligence and stuff, in that language.

Patti: Ah, kind of interesting.

675: Yeah.

Patti: And it's in Monterey, right?

675: Yes it is. Yeah.

Patti: Yeah. Well, seems like it'd be nice.

675: Yeah haha.

Patti: And then you've… As you've gone through all of this, is there something that you think might be helpful to ask that I'm not asking or... I mean, do you think of anything-

675: I don't know.

Patti: ... that I'm missing or?

675: The goal of the study's to kind of see what makes people tick, right?

Patti: Yeah, makes people tick but also maybe help inform us better about some of the characters that you might want to look for as new recruit candidates. You know, there is no perfect solution but-

675: Yeah.

Patti: ... some motivational kind of things, like why? Why-

675: Yeah.

Patti: ... did you come here? You know.

675: Yeah, I think the why's a big thing.

Patti: I think you got your why though. I think you know why you came-

675: Yeah, exactly, so it doesn't-

Patti: ... and it's kind of interesting to me.

675: I was actually... Yeah, I was very clear on my why. I don't know.

Patti: Yeah, so that. Not everybody... You know, some of the questions I'm asking, other people have suggested to me and that's why I added on.

675: Oh right.

Patti: But I mean, I don't know the answer to the question so I'm asking you.

675: Yeah. Maybe like... Because this is something I kind of grappled with is, why do you think your why will get you through?

Patti: Oh.

675: Because I had always heard you need to have a very clear you know purpose for why you're here and think about that when times get hard, but-

Patti: So-

675: ... you know, why do you think your purpose is stronger than others?

Patti: What do you think about your why?

675: Um like, why I failed almost?

Patti: No, why did you want to come, and then-

675: Yeah.

Patti: But then that why didn't push you through but what-

675: Yeah.

Patti: What would you call your why?

675: I think my why was that I thought there was really bad people in the world and I wanted to be part of the team that went and killed them.

Patti: Okay.

675: But why it didn't work was ultimately I found out I think family and my girlfriend meant a lot more to me than I thought, I guess.

Patti: Right. Right, right.

675: But I knew how much they meant to me but I had to come out here to realize that they were my priority over this.

Patti: Yeah. But you wouldn't have known that otherwise.

675: Exactly.

Patti: Right, right, right. Okay, so I think that's it. We're good?

675: Okay.

Patti: Let me see here if I can.