**TRANSCRIBER NAME: ENS Goldman**

**Date: 1/30/2022**

**Participant #: 680**

Interviewer (Code in blue): Ledford

Participant (Code in black): #680

**CDR Ledford:**

**All right. Do you mind if I record this? This... I can't write notes as fast as you're gonna speak-**

**680:**

**Okay.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So, appreciate it. Um, [inaudible 00:00:12] so it's January 6, 2022. This is Andrew Ledford, and I'm with number 680. Can you write your name on the front of that too? Yup, there you go. Perfect. I'll take this. Um, so, and I'll just be upfront, dude. I mean, I'm a Team guy, I was with 226. I know your father. Um, and what we talk about here stays in here, won't say a word, um, it's just between us.**

**680:**

**Okay.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Um, [crosstalk 00:01:00] yeah. So, you know, as far as I'm concerned, you're just 680, and that's how it'll stay.**

**680:**

**Okay.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Um, so were you 351?**

**680:**

**Yes.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, so 351. And when did you leave, what phase?**

**680:**

**Halfway through second week.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Half- halfway through second phase?**

**680:**

**Second week-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Oh, second week.**

**680:**

**Of first phase.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So, second week, first phase. So, that was about 10 weeks ago. 351. So, little bit about, uh, your childhood, um, parents together, siblings, did you move around a lot, sports that you played?**

**680:**

**Um, parents weren't together. My Mom died when I was three. Uh, siblings, I have three of them. Moved around a lot to various countries. Well, just... I grew up in Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**And then, uh, just moved around a lot. And, um, uh, yeah. I mean, I... My family didn't, but I did. I, I chose to do, like, different schools [crosstalk 00:02:17] high school, like semester programs in high school. Um, and, like, the-[crosstalk 00:02:18]**

**CDR Ledford:**

**What kind of programs?**

**680:**

**I, I did a school called The Island School in the Bahamas, which is actually started by a Team guy.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Huh.**

**680:**

**Um...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Called... It's called The Island School?**

**680:**

**The Island School. Yep.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**What, what is it? What's, um-**

**680:**

**It's a research, uh, semester program so you can do all your core classes that you need to keep going to high school, um, but you do research with [inaudible 00:02:47] which does a bunch of marine ecology, and, um, stuff like that, like, like lionfish was-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Something I was researching. Um, and you work a lot with research there, and you do pu-... You publish an article before you leave.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Huh.**

**680:**

**Um-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**What is it... Particular semester, or a particular year group, like, just juniors?**

**680:**

**Junior year. Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Junior year.**

**680:**

**Well, you can go as a sophomore, but it's most... Most juniors go, so...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Would you recommend it?**

**680:**

**Yes. I'd really, really recommend it.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Huh.**

**680:**

**Um, and then I did a program called NOLS, which-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, I know about NOLS. Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, and I went to military school freshman year, so-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Freshman year of high school?**

**680:**

**Yeah. Generally would not recommend-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Where, where did you go?**

**680:**

**As a school. Fishburne Military Academy.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Uh-huh (affirmative) Not your favorite place?**

**680:**

**No. Um, yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Um, sports?**

**680:**

**Oh, yeah. Uh... res-... Started playing rugby in Abu Dhabi, and then wrestled though high school, and then played rugby in college.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. Wrestling. And where did you go to college?**

**680:**

**Queens University of Charlotte.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. Queens in Charlotte. Uh, what... Did you get a-**

**680:**

**I left-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Four year?**

**680:**

**I left after a year to join the military.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. One year. What were you studying there?**

**680:**

**Um, I mean, I, I still-[crosstalk 00:04:23]**

**CDR Ledford:**

**You didn't declare a major yet?**

**680:**

**It was, um, environmental-[crosstalk 00:04:25]**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Environmental.**

**680:**

**Research.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. Okay. [crosstalk 00:04:29] So, you went from, uh, high school to Queens University for a year, and then boot camp?**

**680:**

**No, I took some time off to prepare for this.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay.**

**680:**

**So it wasn't back to back, but-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**That was my next career step.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. [crosstalk 00:04:47] How much time did you take between Queens and-**

**680:**

**Um, about-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Boot camp?**

**680:**

**More than I'd like, 'cause of COVID, but it was like, 'cause it really stopped my, um, uh, enlistment, but it was about a year and a half.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**About a year and a half.**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay, so year and a half between Queens and boot camp.**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mkay. Um, if you had to describe your personality in three traits, how would you describe it?**

**680:**

**Um, uh, well rounded, maybe, would be one of them.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Uh, pretty calm, usually. And... I don't know. I don't think I've ever been asked this, so, um, (laughs) uh... Driven, when it's the right thing.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Driven, yeah. Okay. I think we've covered the last five years prior to coming to, um, to BUD/S, but if you're looking back at your life experiences, is there an experience, or several experiences that stand out, and that they really shaped you, and molded you? Like, if there's experiences that really made you who you are-**

**680:**

**Um-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**More than others.**

**680:**

**Yeah, there's a few. Um, I mean, I've been asked this before, but-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm.**

**680:**

**Because of your relationship to my Dad-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**You can probably understand why.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**We were growing up, uh, go-... On Blackwater-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, definitely shaped, um, my appreciation for special operations.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yep.**

**680:**

**Um, and just the kind of people I would meet-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**'Cause of him.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Um, yeah. So, def- definitely shaped my interest in, in doing this. Um, it wasn't always, like, I, like, wanted to be a SEAL. I had... Like, I, I had looked at, um... Actually seriously considered going into the French Foreign Legion.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Really?**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**You're kidding. Why (laughs) the Foreign Legion?**

**680:**

**Pretty direct route to go to Africa. (laughs)**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Pretty much assured to go there.**

**680:**

**(laughs) But, um, yeah. So-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**And was that... I mean, is that really the, the biggest part of it? Like, I mean if you go French Foreign Legion, you take on a new name, you've got to-**

**680:**

**My Dad always talked about it like his favorite [inaudible 00:07:41] like, the most interesting. He's, he's like, huge into history. And it's, like-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**The most interesting community. You can, like... You can-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Right.**

**680:**

**Be... You can be Jeffrey Dahmer, and go there-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. Exactly.**

**680:**

**And, and you're free. [inaudible 00:07:53]**

**CDR Ledford:**

**I know, yeah.**

**680:**

**You know, so it's, it's pretty great, yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Is that something that was appealing for you?**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Just kind of completely new identity?**

**680:**

**Yep.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Interesting.**

**680:**

**Um, I don't really have anything to, like-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**I... Nothing to hold me back, so-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, but Blackwater-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Uh, being around that environment, like, constantly. I, I didn't have... There was no Mom. It was just my Dad, and like, his work, and that's all... The, the only thing I was exposed to.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**So, it was... Kind of just just all that.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, and, uh, but it's good because I knew that it wasn't about, you know, being a... Being a [inaudible 00:08:38] where-**

**680:**

**I'd, I'd wanted to go into the line of work. Um, but, I mean, after a lot of, like, thinking, and just talking to people, I'd, like, realized that this is the community that most fit, I guess, how I thought, um, and, uh, yeah. So-**

**680:**

**Um, but... [inaudible 00:09:03] Sorry. Go ahead.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, no, no. Go ahead. Yeah.**

**680:**

**I was gonna say, also the... Growing up in Abu Dhabi-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. Yeah.**

**680:**

**And, um, I, I think a combination of NOLS and The Island School-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Um, yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So-**

**680:**

**Were the places that I grew the most.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, so growing up in Abu Dhabi, what is... What do you feel like that did for you in shaping you?**

**680:**

**Um, I got to see a lot of the world at a very young age. Um, and it would be, like, I... Yeah, I don't know. My Dad was huge on, on, like, uh, first hand education, and, and, uh, and just... So, I think I learned more about the world, and just everything from him just taking us to place-... Like, there were... Then we went to Rawanda, did-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**A whole tour of the whole genocide, everything.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**We went to China and did, um, history of the CCP, and Tiananmen Square, all that, so we got [inaudible 00:10:19] like, when we on trips, it was education. It wasn't just like, "Let's go to the beach."**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, which I really, really appreciate. Um, and I'm like, very happy. I wish I stayed in Abu Dhabi longer and finished up high school there. Um, but that's always something I realized looking back, and the times, like, I feel like I should be in America. Like-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Yeah. You know?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So you didn't finish high school in Abu Dhabi. How, how long were you-**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**In high school there?**

**680:**

**For four years. I started... I did all high school in Virginia.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Oh, in Virginia. Okay.**

**680:**

**So, um, yeah. But, so that aspect of Abu Dhabi was probably the most influential was not necessarily just the country, but it's accessibility to the rest of the world.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**To the rest of the world, yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, and just the people you meet at a, uh, international school-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Are, like, much more... [inaudible 00:11:15] just, like, much more driven, know what they want to do, know, like, what, what it takes to do something important.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, and, yeah, just being in that environment, was, like, you know, there's, there's infinite room for growth, so-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, my father was Army, and, uh, I spent junior high in Panama.**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**That's where we lived in Central America. Yeah, I-**

**680:**

**You can agree.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. Same. I... In fact, it makes me sad that my own kids don't have that experience that I... They're not gonna see that side of what you're talking about. Um, so going into a little bit about this, and your... What led you to join the Navy instead of the French Foreign Legion? Um, so you're immersed in it, you're seeing all the personalities, line of work, and everything. Um, are there any other factors that kind of led to you to join, uh, and specifically go NSW?**

**680:**

**Um, well, it was something I wanted to do as a kid-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**But as I got older, I realized it's not the only thing out there-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**That's cool. Um, but... I g-... I think what it came down to, when I really think about it, was, um, I wanted to work with my Dad in some capacity-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**At some point. Not, like, there's no family business-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**But, you know, um, we work in the private sector-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yep.**

**680:**

**And NSW is from start to finish, from, you know, enlisting to being pinned is probably the fastest route there.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Um, 'cause you... Because it's... Because it's a small community within a non combatant branch. Not, you know-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**You're not soldiers, the, the Navy yet-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**So-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Absolutely.**

**680:**

**It's, um... I think that, that really streamsline... It streamlines it because it's, like, this... The SEALS are a community in the Navy. They have... NSW has it's own sec- section of the Navy-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Here, and, you know, Virginia Beach. And the rest is, like the... It's like, you... Give you all the funding you need. You can do whatever you want.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**I think with the Army is much more regimental strings that, um, make it long-... Make it... Make it just a bit longer for you to be... Especially right now. Um-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**When there's nothing going on. Um-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**How did you know that? Did you... Is that something you just exposed to, or did people advise you?**

**680:**

**I think... I think... I, I... You know, I talked to... I realized it a lot-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Um, just looking into, uh, various pipelines-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, but I was also... I talked to... I talked to my Dad about it a lot.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Oh, so you did talk to him a lot about... Yeah. So, how was that... And to be honest with you, I'm, I'm interested, too, because I've got two sons, and I'm [inaudible 00:14:51] like, how much do I talk to them about this? Um-**

**680:**

**To be honest, if I can-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Give a currency-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, I don't think, uh... I don't think my Dad has had more... I don't think anything has shaped my Dad more than the SEAL teams.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Uh-huh (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Um, like, he did a lot of cool things before-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**But, you know, it's, it's, it's a very impactful community.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**So, and, and, and I... And I... And I grew up with the, like, absolute utmost respect for this, and it's, it's... That's part of the reason I ultimately wanted to go this route.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Um, just through the people I knew that he knew since [inaudible 00:15:42] and... But he is pretty upset, rightly so or not, it could be just personally because I'm his son-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**I mean, he's like, very upset with the way he feels NSW's going right now.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**The direction that NSW's going? Not just BUD/S? So, no.**

**680:**

**BUD/S.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Oh, the way BUD/S is, and how, like, this whole thing happened?**

**680:**

**Yeah, 'cause it wasn't... It wasn't... Not to say that there's a whole thing going on, but it... I, I don't think it was me, I think he heard a lot more-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**From other people. 'Cause it's like, if I say something, he's like, "Yeah. I..." You know, you can give some room for embellishment-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**From, from, from a subjective standpoint, but I think it was he heard more about, "Oh, this isn't just my son. This-"**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, and it was from other parents of... Or, or, or Team guys who had sons that went through, not just right now in, in my class, but, um-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**And, yeah. And that was, like, after coming out of BUD/S, I was... That was... It was been... It's been very, uh, and especially like, going from [inaudible 00:16:58], it's been very, like... I feel like it's my fault that he doesn't like this community now.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**And I don't want to obviously put that on myself at all, but he'd, he'd... It's not that he doesn't like this community, he just doesn't like what's going on right now.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**So...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**When we got done here, remind me to tell you about something afterwards about this whole thing. It might help. Um, what motivates you on a daily basis?**

**680:**

**Um, I don't know. Just the... Just, uh, probably the desire to not fall into what most people are doing, I guess.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So-**

**680:**

**Which I know can be broken, that's pretty big, but-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mediocrity?**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Normal day to day 9:00 to 5:00?**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. Am I describing it well, or is it-**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Is that more to that?**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay.**

**680:**

**Yeah. I mean, that's... I guess-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**I don't want to put words into your mouth.**

**680:**

**Inevitably, what it comes down to.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**So...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**9:00 to 5:00. How would you describe your experience at BUD/S?**

**680:**

**Uh, very informative. Like, I like... I, I learned, like, more here in the... In the span of while I was in BUD/S, [inaudible 00:18:34] and, like, two months in there. But [inaudible 00:18:38]**

**CDR Ledford:**

**How so?**

**680:**

**About... Well, I mean I, I think I learned a bit about it... About what I learned here in places like NOLS, just anywhere where you're put under pressure-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Wherein something gets hard. Um, but that's, like, really where you see who and what people are. Um, and I think that, like, some of the most important lessons I've, I've very recently learned, just about... I mean, I don't even know what it... I, I don't know how to exactly put my finger on it, it's just about, like... People... I... How people are, how, how people interact with each other-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**What, like... I understand why it's important that it's so hard, for sure. Um... And, I guess I've learned, um, just to, like, let things go. I don't know. Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**And that's not something that you knew before as much?**

**680:**

**Well, I, I think yes and no. I think it's different when you have absolutely no control over it.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**And, like before, there's some things you have a little bit more control than you do when you're in the military.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**How about the interaction-**

**680:**

**Like, if I got kicked out of college, I could just transfer to another college.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**You know what I mean? I can't, like... I have no agency.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**So. Sorry, but what were you gonna say?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**No, no. It's good. Um, how was your interaction with students, instructors, that experience as well?**

**680:**

**Uh, it was good. I mean, I'll talk about the students first.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**But, um, in hindsight, I feel like I, uh, should have played a much bigger role, and had the ability to play a much bigger role, a leadership role.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm.**

**680:**

**But I feel like I was always walking on some kind of eggshells because in some capacity or another, everyone knew who my Dad was, and-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Instructors definitely would, but students too?**

**680:**

**But, yeah, students.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Hm.**

**680:**

**Um, and it's less so that they knew... Yeah, so I felt like... And the... This is kind of how I felt about a lot of things, but, like-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**I, I felt like, um, anything I did wrong would have been a reflection of who my dad is.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, so I was more hesitant to take risks. I knew it's, like, "Oh, of cour-"... Like, I don't know. If you... It, it felt like if I did the right thing, it's like, "Oh, he should have done that. That's who his Dad is." If I did the wrong thing, it's like, "You fuck..." Like, you're just-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yep.**

**680:**

**Is that-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**That's maybe the best way to explain it.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Makes total sense. Yeah.**

**680:**

**So, and I shouldn't have done that. I should have just really not cared anyways. Like, yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**And so that made you a little bit more hesitant to speak up?**

**680:**

**To put myself out there, yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Is there a time you made a difficult decision during BUD/S, and what was going through your mind?**

**680:**

**Um, I mean, yeah. Probably the most difficult decision was, like, like, when I left, I was-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Pulled out of a boat because I, uh, couldn't breathe. I had SIPE pretty bad-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**And we had a land portage, and I was just not able to perform anywhere near where I needed to be, and I was pulled under my boat, pulled out of my boat by instructors.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**And I knew, like, the guys in the boat hated me, and rightly so. I've been under a boat with people who couldn't perform, and it just hurts everyone else. Um-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**And you felt that from the other guys all ready?**

**680:**

**Yeah, but I was pretty much told by the instructors, like, "Look, you're fucking hurting them. They hate you. You can get, like... I'm, I'm not letting... I'm not letting you back under a boat 'cause you're just hurting them. If you do get back under the boat, we're... Like, we're just gonna pound you into submission." Pretty much. Um, and so I, like... It's such a weird kind of stand off because I was like, "I can't fucking quit." But if I'm only... Um, if I stay in, I'm only doing this from... I'm only... It's, like... It would have been extremely selfish to have stayed in.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**So, yeah, that was a tough decision.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So you had them saying that on one side, you had boat crew saying, "What are you doing here?" Which... I mean, were they saying it out loud, or they-**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Boat crew's saying it out loud as well.**

**680:**

**Yeah. I was... 'Cause I was... I got put into the smurf crew-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**So it was not a group I'd known at all.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, yeah. And I had no chemistry with any of the guys under there.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**I'm not... Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So were you... You were in a different group originally, at the beginning? And this was...**

**680:**

**But I think more than that, it felt like I knew I needed help-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**And the Corpsman knew there was, like... I mean, he even... I heard, like... He said to the instructor right in front of me-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**He's like, "Yeah, his lungs are really fucked up." Um, and then, I, I don't know. The instructor just said, "You're not, like, you're getting back under the boat." So I got back under the boat, um, and then I was pulled out on the way back, and, yeah, told that. And then I got called back to the grinder after I left BUD/S, and the OIC pulled me into his office, [inaudible 00:25:39]**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Pulled me into his office and said, um, like, yeah... He said a lot of... He's like, "You probably already know this, but a lot of BUD/S comes down to luck and timing, and, um, to be honest, guys in the past have gotten rolled for a lot less than what you had going on with your lungs." So it just made it seem very political.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, and he-**

**680:**

**And not... And not merit based.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**And he's the OIC of the-**

**680:**

**Of first phase.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Of first phase. So he said that, and... But still-**

**680:**

**Well, there's nothing. I mean, I'm out... I've been out of the class for, like, four days, so... Three days.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm. Okay.**

**680:**

**I think he called me back in because... I pretty much just told my Dad what happened, and do you know [inaudible 00:26:38]?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. Yeah, I know him.**

**680:**

**He, he was in my Dad's class, so he knows him pretty well, and I think-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**He didn't... He wasn't like, "Hey, why is my son there?" But he-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Just kind of reached out, and he's like, "Hey." You know, "How, how you doing?" He's like, "Oh, [inaudible 00:26:50], blah, blah, blah." And I think... I... That was the last thing I wanted.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. I know.**

**680:**

**Fucking my Dad having anything to do with me being in-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, and I told him after, I was like, "Just don't fucking say anything." What, like... Whatever. Um... So, yeah. That made me look pretty bad (laughs) on the...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. I know.**

**680:**

**Uh, on the grinder.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**It didn't help you-**

**680:**

**No.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**At all.**

**680:**

**No.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, anyways, yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Is there anything you would have done differently?**

**680:**

**Um, like, I hate to kind of just say it like this, because it needs a lot more explanation, but, like, I probably would have gotten on PEDs.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**You what?**

**680:**

**Would have gotten on Performance Enhancing Drugs.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. Like, um, so SIPE... Word on the street is Viagra. (laughs)**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Which I don't... Have you seen any literature on this?**

**680:**

**Mm-mm (negative) [inaudible 00:27:59]-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**I know-**

**680:**

**[inaudible 00:27:59] has only become a thing in, like, the past five years, and it's-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**The only people who get are triathletes and people in BUD/S.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**It's really weird. It's a... It's, uh, yeah, it's a weird feeling.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**And I know word on the street is that Viagra-**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Helps with SIPE. We were talking about this last night, just to researchers, is, like, I'm gonna dig in... After today, I'm gonna dig into... I want to see the scientific literature-**

**680:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**CDR Ledford:**

**That supports this. I'm willing to bet that there's zero.**

**680:**

**Yeah. I just think people are... Need... They're nothing, so they're, they're like... They're like, "All right. It might work."**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, exactly. Yeah.**

**680:**

**I never took Viagra, but I... To be honest, I was talking more along the lines of, like, testosterone, and... Not HGH, but-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Testosterone, and, um, tren.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Tren? What's tren?**

**680:**

**Tren... I- I've, I've never took any fucking PEDs, so-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**I've learned more about, just the background of some. Tren is just, like, um, um... Or, tren. Yeah, T-R-E-N. It's like a [inaudible 00:29:06]. You can get it at, like, a supplement store, though, but it, it kind of just really accelerates blood flow into your muscles.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Hm.**

**680:**

**I think. I'd have to do more research on it.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**But, um, either way, I know, like, recovery is 90% of-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Performance in BUD/S, 'cause you don't have a lot of time to recover-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**So, yeah, like when you're taking things, you're gonna be more recovered than the rest of the guys-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**When the pipeline... When the... When selection is competition based-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, yeah, there's a divide, probably.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**And do you feel like there's definitely that going on that helps?**

**680:**

**I mean, it's such a tricky situation, 'cause I-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Don't want to take anything away from the guys that are there-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**And that earned the right to be there.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, but I mean, when everyone is on the same page about it-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**And there's HGH and performance enhancing drugs found in the building-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**That we left prep at, it... Like, there's, like, way too much evidence to refute some of this shit.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, and then when you, like... You can only... You can only be so naïve for some people, and it's like, there's some people that clearly on it, and then when you realize, and you're... And you, like, actually realize, like, a lot of fucking people are on it. And then, within that group, the people that secured were, uh, pretty much all on it.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**And I'm sure this isn't the first time you've heard this.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, no. Yeah. I mean, it is. I mean, we... Doing this interviews, and...**

**680:**

**Uh, so...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**That's where the Viagra stuff came up, and-**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**But I, I don't know. It's a... It's a tricky field because you can... You can really start to, like, just feel sorry for yourself because you weren't on PEDs.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**And like, and, yeah. So...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Would you consider going back?**

**680:**

**Yeah. Uh, I would love to go back, um, but at this point, with just kind of the options I have on the, like, the Navy career that I'd have to take before doing that-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, there... Like, there's just so... Like, you talk to people who come back-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**There's zero consistency across the board of-[crosstalk 00:31:37]**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. [crosstalk 00:31:37] Hit and miss.**

**680:**

**Uh, yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**It seems very hit and miss. And what's more guaranteed now is if after getting through an A school, it's just, uh, laterally transferring to the Army to go right to, um, special forces.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**And that's tough because this is, like, a... I feel like I'm giving up on a community that I wanted to be a part of-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**For a really long time. Uh, but, uh, just, like, the same reason I joined the military in the first place, there's more ways to get to where I want to be, so...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**But if you lateral transfer to the Army, don't you have to be in the Army for five years before doing something like the Q Course?**

**680:**

**Nope. They just started, within the past three years, they just started something called the 18 XRAY-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. I know 18 XRAY.**

**680:**

**And that's just... Pretty much, you can go in a civilian and go right to SFAS after Infantry school.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Hm.**

**680:**

**Which I, I have a really good buddy doing that right now that's a class up. Um, and then you can also just do that from a lateral transfer-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Interesting.**

**680:**

**Because that community's so undermanned because of how hard it is to get in.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**I think that's the same reason the SEAL teams did that back in, like, the early 2000s, um, 'cause you had to be a petty officer before you went to BUD/S. I think that used to be the case, right?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**What's that? No. No, no.**

**680:**

**You didn't... You didn't have to be in the Navy before you joined?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**No. Nope.**

**680:**

**Huh.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Never. Yeah. In fact, most of my class, straight from boot camp.**

**680:**

**Really?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Very, very young.**

**680:**

**Okay. I didn't know that. I thought that... Thought that might have been case, but-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Nope.**

**680:**

**I think that might be why-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, we're only community where you can go straight from boot camp in.**

**680:**

**I think that's why, um, the Green Berets might open that because their-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Uh, community's really undermanned.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yup.**

**680:**

**So, I don't know.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, and I, I was lateral transfer. I came in from the Marine Corp Infantry.**

**680:**

**Really?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Went from the Infantry to Spec war after four years.**

**680:**

**Did you do your career, uh, in the Teams as a enlisted, or did you transfer... Did you go-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**No, I was. I came over as an O.**

**680:**

**Oh, okay.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. So, yeah, when I went through BUD/S, I was a Lieutenant in the Navy, but I was a Marine Corps Captain, went to Navy Lieutenant. Um, but going from the Infantry, awesome, like, it was a great experience to have that before coming here.**

**680:**

**Yup.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**That definitely helped me. Um, were there any practices that you had, like, physical, mental, or spiritual practices that kind of helped you push through challenges?**

**680:**

**Um, yeah. I think they change depending on the evolution, but, I don't know, the hardest evolution, probably boats, and I'd-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Usually just... I'd, like... I'd, I'd never... I'd always kind of look around at everyone, and make sure that, like, it's kind of fucked up, but I'd see how much everyone was, like, hurting-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**And that would, like, kind of piss me off.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**It would piss you off?**

**680:**

**Yeah. Well, it'd just be, like, like, what could I do more, I don't know, kind of, and-[crosstalk 00:35:01]**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Oh, okay. Got it.**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So you'd see how bad they were hurting, and you were like, "All right. I've got to put out more."**

**680:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. They were hurting.**

**680:**

**And I'd also just... I really focused on my breathing, a lot of the time.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**How so? What, what kind of breathing?**

**680:**

**Just... I would, like... Uh, especially on runs and running boat, um, just having the most... Ha-... Trying to keep the breathing really consistent the whole time. Um, like, take really deep breaths. Uh, as deep of breaths as I could, like getting all the oxygen out, um, but not... And, and then try to, like, do it with every, like, fourth foot step, or something like that-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**So it'd be the same across the board the whole time. And it really kind of, like, calmed me down, and took my mind off everything.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. Good.**

**680:**

**Um, yeah. I mean, to be honest, boats were the only thing I feel like I can... Or, boats and the four mile run, the morning four mile run was the only thing I really feel like I needed to adopt some kind of strategy to help me get through. And logs a few times, but...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. How has this, uh, changed you, if it has at all, as a person?**

**680:**

**Um, I... It's weird. I feel like in some senses, this is, like, something I've been looking forward to for so long, and it's like, like, even th-... Even though it didn't have the outcome that I wanted, it feels like some kind of weight has been lifted off my shoulders, and I can now choose, with a very new perspective, to come back-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm.**

**680:**

**Knowing that I'm physically capable of doing it-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Or go a different route. Um, and, and have little guilt about... Well, well, I don't know, some guilt, but a little less, much less guilt because I, like, came here and I did try.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**So, um...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Yeah. I don't know. Uh, and then, but mostly, just learning about, uh, like people. 'Cause, like, people can be, like, I- I don't know. I've learned, like, you can just have, like, a dude, like an absolute dick in real life, but then you could, like, put him under a boat, and he might put out, that, like, and make sure that everyone else is doing good.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yup.**

**680:**

**Which, weird. It's like, there's a lot things that aren't... That feel backwards.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Um...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So you definitely, as far as the change goes, you feel this weight lifted.**

**680:**

**Ah, it's like... In a sense.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**In a... In a sense, yes.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, but I also, like, don't really know where to go from here. Uh, this has kind of been, like, something that's been very stable for my whole life, 'cause I've always known I've wanted to go into special operations.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**And now, I'm like, kind of, like, "What the fuck do I do next?"**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**In a sense. Um... So...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**In your opinion, for the others who made it, what made them successful?**

**680:**

**Um... In my honest opinion-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**And I don't want to speak for everyone-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Even though there was only 13 people-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Um, just selling their soul. Like, you have to make a deal with the devil at some point at BUD/S**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**And, uh...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Because they would do whatever it took?**

**680:**

**Absolutely whatever it took.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, and that includes other stuff as well?**

**680:**

**Includes PEDs-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**That includes forcing someone out to make it... To, to hide your inabilities in a cert-... In a... In a juncture-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Or making someone else look bad so that the attention gets off you.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Um, and these are things I was so unprepared for.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**'Cause they were not what I was taught about this pipeline growing up.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**680:**

**Um, yeah. A lot of just, like, shitty behavior, in my opinion. Like... Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**680:**

**Just like selling your soul to, to the devil, so... But, uh, again, I don't want to speak for everyone.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. Yeah. It's not everyone. All right. I'm gonna stop recording here.**