**TRANSCRIBER NAME: ENS Goldman**

**Date: 1/18/2022**

**Participant #: 602**

Interviewer (Code in blue): CDR Ledford

Participant (Code in black): #602

**CDR Ledford:**

**All right, do you mind? I'm gonna record this. And this is just so that, dude, I can't write-**

**602:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**... this fast enough to keep track of all this.**

**602:**

**No issues.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Uh, so, s- I'm with 602, and can you write your name at the top of... last name, comma first name. This is Andrew Ledford with 602 on fourth of January, 2022. S- Thank you. So, we've gotten the informed consent, you're good with us recording.**

**602:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Um, I'm gonna ask you some questions. Uh, got basically about 10 questions. You can go into however much detail you want on these. And it's just kinda gettin' an idea of your background, ground. So, first off, before we get started, what phase did you leave, uh, BUD/S at?**

**602:**

**So, I was, uh, first phase, second week performance drop.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Second week. Okay. And how long ago was that?**

**602:**

**That was 351, so, um, mid-October, late October, I think it was.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**351, and late October. So, yeah, so, that'd be how many weeks? That's, uh, eight-**

**602:**

**10, maybe, now.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**... nine, 10, yeah, 10 weeks. Okay. 10 weeks ago. So, first question is if you can tell me a little bit about your childhood. Like, were you, did you move around a lot, parents together, siblings?**

**602:**

**Um, no, I didn't really move around. Um, so, I grew up in West Virginia. Uh, I have a older sister who's, like, a year older than me, and I have a younger sister who's four years younger than me. Um, I kinda had, I guess, a-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So, you're middle child.**

**602:**

**... I'm middle child.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**Yeah, [inaudible 00:02:16] three sisters. And then, my mom was a kindergarten teacher, um, and my dad, uh, was in the... he did commercial construction. Um, and then, you know, I grew up playing football, basketball, uh, always loved, like, hunt, fish, doing stuff like that in the outdoors. Um, high school, parents divorced in high school. I forget, I think I was a sophomore maybe. Um, um, and then, yeah, after high school, went to college.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So, you went to go community college, university-**

**602:**

**I went to, uh, West Virginia University.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**... Okay, West Virginia. Did you s- go all four years?**

**602:**

**Yes, I, uh, I got a degree in finance.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**'Kay. If you could describe your personality in three traits, what would you describe it as?**

**602:**

**Um, hard-working, stubborn, uh, caring.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. So, for the last five years, I think that kind of covered, the last five years prior to training-**

**602:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**CDR Ledford:**

**... uh, was basically university, then boot camp. You go straight through-**

**602:**

**So, I, uh, graduated college in 2017. Um, I interned with a, uh, with a bank. Before I graduated, they offered me a job. Always knew this is what I wanted to do, but, one, I w- I, I've always stayed active, but I wasn't, like, solely train training. Um, and they offered me a job while I was still in school, and I, so, I took it, just, like, "Well, I just need to transition while I can, start to train, and I can make money."**

**602:**

**Um, and then I worked for, let's see, 2018, 2019, and then 2020, uh, I technically signed up. I was going to sign up before the COVID stuff, I was ready to. Um, then all the COVID stuff happened and I figured I would wait. 'Cause I didn't know how it would back the pipeline up, I didn't know how it would change. So, I figured I would wait, train more, and then when it kind of calmed back down is when I signed up. Which was, um, I guess, like, October, November of 2020.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mkay. So, of these life experiences, um, that you had previous, um, to BUD/S, which ones would you describe as kind of life-shaping, or did you have any kind of life-altering experiences that really, uh, molded you or changed you in some way?**

**602:**

**Nothing crazy. Uh, I think when I... I think the biggest thing for me that I took way was, uh, when I was working, uh, cor- bein' a corporate bank job, um, it really made me realize, you know, I, that I wanted to have a life, a purpose, and I... everything is needed, I get that, but me working at a bank, sitting down a desk was not something that I could see myself doing the rest of my life. And, um, or, really, anything in that kinda realm or nature.**

**602:**

**And I felt like I need, I mean, I always knew this is what I wanted, but it, it just kinda bolstered that fact that, you know, this is what you gotta do. So, even, you know, no matter, you know, I was 25 when I joined, which some people thought was old. I don't know if that was or not, um, so, you know. (laughs)**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Good. Do you know, uh, do you know Connor well?**

**602:**

**Blackwell?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**602:**

**I met him in, or in, actually, I met him in, um, BUD/S prep in Great Lakes.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay.**

**602:**

**So.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**I'm just curious, are you guys friends?**

**602:**

**Uh, I mean, I've... we've hung out before.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**You just know each other.**

**602:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay.**

**602:**

**I mean, yeah, more, like, just, but, um...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. No, I was just curious.**

**602:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Um, how do you think those experiences, working at that corporate job, knowing what... that's not what you wanna do, how'd those impact your training, if they did?**

**602:**

**Um, well, it made me realize that I knew the option of quitting. (laughs) The option of quitting, at least in the Navy, was going to a ship and sailing around on a ship, and even though I'd joined the Navy, that wasn't what I wanted to do.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**602:**

**Um, so, I d- I knew that, you know, that the price of failure, what that would look like. And even though that wasn't the same as working at a bank and, you know, sitting behind a desk all day, I knew the price of failure would be something that I didn't want, um, so, that just was, like, why I had to, you know, I had to train harder and work-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Right.**

**602:**

**... so I just can avoid that all together. (laughs)**

**CDR Ledford:**

**That's good. 'Kay. I think you already covered, uh, question four, your background that led you to join the Navy.**

**602:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**CDR Ledford:**

**You just covered that. Um, what motivates you on a daily basis?**

**602:**

**I just don't wanna be average. Um, it's not really any g- given one thing, like, I have this over, you know, this big thing that we're talking, saying, "I have to do this or that right now," 'cause, I mean, I, I'm in this little, um, weird area, spot right now, because I don't know what I'm doing.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**Um, but it's just... it's still about the I don't wanna be... I don't wanna go out average. And I don't wanna look back when I'm 80 years old, if I even make it that long, and, you know, it wasn't worth it or, you know, it was... I can't look at my grandkids, or my kids, or whoever, and say, "Yeah, I did something that I actually enjoyed and that I thought was, like, good, and purposeful."**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Good. Describe your, uh, experience at BUD/S.**

**602:**

**Um-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**First phase.**

**602:**

**... in, in terms of, like, difficulty, in terms of what I thought of, I mean, it's definitely the hardest thing I've ever done-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Everything.**

**602:**

**... in my life. Um-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**... I mean, that was, that was no question. Um, I mean, physically, it was the hardest thing I ever done in my life. And even mentally it was, but, um, you know, for me, I know it's different for everybody, but, you know, it's what I wanted, um, and I know there's, there's different reason why some guys get out of the pipeline or they leave the pipeline. Some-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**... some are dropped like me, or some quit in hell week, maybe not even because they really want to, but, but because they're just, you know, so banged up and, you know, dying almost, they c- they know they can't keep up, and, you know. Um, but my experience was, you know, even though I was jut dropped and even thought wasn't how I wanted to work out, um, it was probably still the best ex- like, best experience of my life.**

**602:**

**mean, I mean, I can look back and always say that, in the... I did some of the dumbest and coolest (laughs) stuff in my life, um, while being here and, you know, I can't, I can't trade that for anything, it's not worth anything, in terms of monetary payment. You know, the only, the only reason you can get that experience is to actually try it and do it, so.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**Um, and I don't re- I mean, I don't regret that at, at all.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**A- Anything, um, during phase, like, with your, you know, with the class, or s- anything, interactions, you know, while you're in training?**

**602:**

**About... What do you mean by that?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Um, so, you described, like, hardest thing ever, physically and mentally, and kinda the best experience of your life. What about interaction with the class, uh, with the instructors, like-**

**602:**

**So, the interar- yeah, okay, so, um, like, the interaction with the class, at least for me, I thought was well. Um, there's definitely multiple different types of people can go through BUD/S and, um, you can tell the difference between guys who, uh, they panic very easy.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**... Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**And you can tell when it comes to something gets hard, they're yellin' at someone to quit or they're, you know, they just, they, they show panic and it, you know, definitely fits in leadership and, and it kinda... Everybody [inaudible 00:11:43] down the lower-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**... echelon, but, um, but besides that, I mean, I always had good interactions with the majority of people. I don't, I mean, I was never not cool with anybody within the class, um, whether that was officer leadership, or LPO leadership, or just even, uh, the newer guys, um, yeah. I mean, in terms of instructors, I mean, I, I get, the instructors are there to do their job, and I get that. So, it's kinda even hard to s- speak-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Right.**

**602:**

**... in my opinion, it's kinda hard to speak. I mean, they're there to, you know, kick our ass, essentially, and-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**602:**

**... um, you know, are there things that I think could've been done differently in some areas? I mean, of course, but that's, you know, hindsight's 20/20 and I can't change that. Um, the only way to ch- w- change how things are done is from within, and I can't do that, so-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**... so.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. Good. Um, is there a time that you had to make a difficult decision during training? And what went through your mind when you had to make that decision?**

**602:**

**While I was in training, no. I mean, it was, I mean, how I look at it, it was, it was just, it was a price I had to pay. It was the admission cost I had to pay to get where I wanted to be.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**So, it was just kinda, like, yeah, I would wake up and I'd be tired and sore and hurt, but it was kinda like, "Well, everybody's feeling this way."**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**Everybody who's ever done it has felt this way. So, it kinda just is, like, you know, for me it was just like, "Suck it up. It's what you wanna do. People have done the same thing before, you can do it," so. But I didn't really have a, a point where I was, like, digging at myself to... as to why I wanted to be here. 'Cause I w- I did before, but then I was just, like, you know, "It's what I need to do and-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**602:**

**... just what has to be done, everybody's done it before, everybody's hurting. I'm not the only one that's in pain right now, so just try and just shut up and handle it and deal with it.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. Is there anything you would've done differently at BUD/S?**

**602:**

**I mean, there, I think there's times where I would've, um, I think I would've just, more or less, pushed until I couldn't go any harder. Um, it might've saved me a little bit of pain on the backend, but, again, I don't know if it would've or not. I mean, I... in terms of while actually being in BUD/S, or even in orientation-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**... I mean, I don't really think there was much I could've done differently. I was, you know, in terms of, like, my own gear and stuff, I was always on top of my gear, I was always handling that, on time, um, being ready with it. I was always trying to help the collaterals, even helping other collaterals. So, like, I don't think I could've done anything else in that realm. It's just, more or less, I sh- I could've performed better in other areas of BUD/S. But a lot of that would've been going back to before BUD/S, in terms of my preparation to make it easier while I was here.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So, your preparation beforehand.**

**602:**

**Yeah, I would've done some things differently.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**What would you have done differently?**

**602:**

**Um, I would've rucked, the... my biggest thing is I would've ru- I would've ruck run more. Um, I did it a few times before, but I didn't know that was, I mean, now that the, the BUD/S pipeline is so, you know, everybody knows about the BUD/S pipeline, there's dudes all over the Internet, who, who've gone through the pipeline that are sharing wealths, like, a wealth of information, um, and I just didn't n- think that... I mean, I always knew that weight running was, was, was a thing, because your running with boats on head, or you're even just running with wet boots and pants, I mean, that's still eight, 10 pounds of weight.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Hm.**

**602:**

**So, you're always running with weight, but, um, I think just being more, more used to running with weight on my back, or on my hips, on my shoulders, wherever, um, to j- to where I would just keep me more durable in the long-run.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**But besides that, yeah, it would just be either ruck w- r- ruck running or, um, just more weighted leg stuff. I did a lot of body-weight leg stuff, and I did do, like, like, weighted squats, lunges, dead lifts, stuff like that, but, um, I think just having more weight beforehand, it kind of builds up your, your bone density, almost. It just keeps you more durable. 'Cause when you're here, you're, all you're doing, is breaking down, breaking down, breaking down, so the... but the idea is, and the goal is, the longer... the more durable you can be upfront-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**... the slower your body breaks down. 'Cause everybody's breaking down, but the more durable you can be, then, the longer you go.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**Um, and so, that would've been something that I would've, in my eyes, I could've done that would've helped make me more durable.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**That's good. Are you considering coming back?**

**602:**

**Uh, I would love to. I mean, I'm 26, so, I know there's an age cutoff. Um, and that's kinda, like, the issue, because, um, you know, I h- people, even in my class, who were previously enlisted, you know, even, well, for example, I'm not gonna say his name, but a guy was in my class and, um-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm.**

**602:**

**... he went through and, like, f- he was dropped the first time through and came through and he actually, um, fini- well, he didn't finish, but he secured my class. Um, and he was picked up two years after his first time, but didn't leave until five, his command wouldn't let him leave. So, um, ideally, yeah, I would love to c- I would love to come back. Knowing what I know now, you know, um, again, that's ki- I was hoping for a performance [inaudible 00:17:46] what I know, 'cause then I could've trained for it.**

**602:**

**But I think the biggest thing is, you know, I don't wanna... I wanna come back, but I don't wanna come back unless I've had the time to prepare myself. I don't wanna come back here just and ha- kinda half-ass it, you know. You know, and it just depends, really, what job I end up getting. And the disk calls, it would, it would be with the command in, in terms of coming back here.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**602:**

**But if I could come back and stay two, two and a half, or even three years, and I had a job that, you know, afforded me time to where I could run, and swim, and train harder, 'cause you can't run on a ship.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, exactly.**

**602:**

**Or a submarine, or s- stuff like that, so, if I had the time that was afforded to me to do it, then absolutely.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**602:**

**Um, but it's... I'm also trying to, trying to let my ego get out of the way in terms of it was always just, for me growing up, it was always SEAL team, SEAL team, SEAL teams.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**Um, but I've tried the past two and a half months, I've tried to just step back and be like, "Well, I think you're not interested in the SEAL teams based off because of, you know, historically, and what you always hear, and read, and see is that it's the hardest in the world, and if you wanna do something, you wanna do the hardest in the world. But I think now I'm trying to step back and look more in the picture of it's the job, it's the operating job, and if I can't do it in the SEAL teams, then, you know, that's still, uh, that's what I wanna do. That's what brought me to wanting to be a SEAL and why I went to BUD/S.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**602:**

**But I can still do that somewhere else if the teams don't work out. Or if I can't come back here, I can, I can still look at going to a different branch or, you know, even going to SWCC, or EOD, or whatever. I can still potentially be in an operational, uh, standpoint.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. What practices, uh, physical, mental, or spiritual, do you use to push through challenges?**

**602:**

**Um, for me, it was just knowing the, the price and the cost to fail. It, um, I mean, there were times where, in phase, that, yeah, I was beat and tired, and wanted it to end, that I wanted the beating to end, and I wanted to get out of the surf, and I wanted to so- run with those who [inaudible 00:20:16], but it was more or less just, like, it'll end when they want it to end and I can't end it myself.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**Um, 'cause I knew ending it myself, what that... how I would handle it. You know, I, I would probably... it would be harder for me to deal with in myself if I ended it. But then, also, what would happen in the, in the future if I did. You know, it'd most likely be with Navy's, a ship going branch, and I'd be on a ship, and that's not what I'd wanna do.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay.**

**602:**

**That kinda what I was, was battling with and, you know, telling myself. Just you know what happens if you, if you leave, you know what happens. And if you don't want that, then you don't leave.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**'Kay. How is this, uh, experience changed you as a person?**

**602:**

**Um, I think it definitely has shown, like, what I can do, and kinda, mentally, what I can withstand, and even physically what I can withstand. 'Cause when you... when everybody comes here, everybody thinks they can, they can do it. Um, but until you actually try it, no one really even knows. And I, I tried to be realistic with myself when we first started.**

**602:**

**I was, like, I don't... no one knows that you have what it takes. I mean, I look around and there are guys who are way more physically, uh, you know, top dogs compared to me, and they were gone the first couple days. Um, so, I think you j- you know, what I, you know, what I could, you know, it showed me kinda what I was made of and what I could do, um, which I think, for me, was, like, the biggest takeaway.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**602:**

**Um, 'cause just going forward in life, and that, and that's, you know, back to the question of coming back, like, that's why I had that idea of, like, yeah, I'd love to come back, because I know I can do it, you know. It wasn't my, it wasn't my mind or my heart that got me out of the program, it was just I, I need to, I should've been a l- I could've been a little better physically prepared in a couple areas. That would've helped.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**602:**

**Um, yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. All right, that was our last question.**

**602:**

**Cool.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**I really appreciate it. Stop these recordings.**