**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Wyatt Long**

**Date: 1/31/2022**

**Participant #: 625**

Interviewer (Code in blue): CDR Andrew Ledford

Participant (Code in black): #625

**Interview Guide**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Just because there's no way I'm going to be able to record everything you're gonna say-**

**625:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**CDR Ledford:**

**... you mind if I record this?**

**625:**

**Oh, yeah, that's...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**All right. Today is January 4, 2022. I am with 625, uh, for the interview. And Chris, what phase did you leave?**

**625:**

**Phase one.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Phase one. Okay. What part of phase one were you in? First week, second week?**

**625:**

**Day one of the third week Monday.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Day one of third week. So, and was that 351, or what class were- [crosstalk 00:00:53]**

**625:**

**Yeah, 351.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So was that about, like, nine weeks, 10 weeks ago?**

**625:**

**Yeah, just about that.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Nine weeks ago. Okay. Class 351.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So, co- tell me a little bit about your childhood, like your parents together, siblings...**

**625:**

**Uh, I have-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**You moved around a lot?**

**625:**

**Yeah. So I had, uh, one... I have one sibling, younger sister. Um, and then my parents got divorced when I was about eight. And then right after that, we moved houses. And then I lived with my mom up until 19, uh, when I joined the Navy.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So you just moved that one time?**

**625:**

**Yes.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Once. And when you were eight?**

**625:**

**Yeah. Right about then.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Eight. Got it.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**If you could describe your personality with three traits, how would you...**

**625:**

**Three traits.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**625:**

**I'd say introverted, uh... Curious. And... Like, upbeat sort of. Happy.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Happy.**

**625:**

**Yeah. Happy. That's a better word than upbeat.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**And so for the last five years prior to training-**

**625:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative)**

**CDR Ledford:**

**... what did you do?**

**625:**

**Um, so I was, let's see... Let me think about this for a second. So for the last, so, I'll, I'll go backwards. Like, six months until I, uh, shipped out, I did, uh, I just trained, like just for BUD/S. Like, physically trained for BUD/S. I should have mentally trained, but-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**625:**

**... I just physically trained. (laughs) Uh, and then before those six months, I did a semest- so the six months before those six months, I did a semester of school and then...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Which school?**

**625:**

**Uh, Purdue.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Oh.**

**625:**

**Yeah. And then, uh... And then the four years before that year was just high school and I was a swimmer.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay.**

**625:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**What'd you swim?**

**625:**

**What event?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**625:**

**Oh. I did, uh... 50 free and hundy free.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Uh-huh (affirmative)**

**CDR Ledford:**

**I was a breaststroker.**

**625:**

**Okay.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Our researcher's a backstroker. And we talk all the time about, like, we can pick out people who were backstrokers-**

**625:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**... and breaststrokers.**

**625:**

**(laughs) That's funny. I can't, I can't do a breast stroke.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Um... In your past experiences from your life before BUD/S, are there any experiences that would, you'd describe as life-shaping experiences that kind of altered things.**

**625:**

**Um...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**In a significant way for you.**

**625:**

**I would say definitely like when we, like, like, [inaudible 00:03:57] when we moved and got divorced. That was definitely, I mean, yeah. There's no way that wasn't life changing.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**625:**

**Uh, additionally... I actually have, one of my friends died in a car crash. That was life changing for me too. That's part of what I, like, motivated me to come here in a way.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative). Interesting. Really?**

**625:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So, when would that age...**

**625:**

**Uh, that was when I, that was when I was, in those six months that I was at Purdue. Like toward the end of that it happened.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Were you in the car?**

**625:**

**No, no. Not at all. This, I was, I was like hundreds of miles away. But, just heard about it.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**You were pretty close with this friend?**

**625:**

**Yeah. I was really good friends with him.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**How do you think those experiences impacted the training at the BUD/S and all? If they did.**

**625:**

**Uh... I wouldn't say they did. I would say more of them are potential reasons for why I'm here, but I wouldn't say they... Like, it's not like I thought of them during BUD/S.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay. How would you describe, um, your background that led you to join the Navy?**

**625:**

**Like reasoning?**

**CDR Ledford: Yeah.**

**625:**

**Um. What basically, I was at, I was at college and I'm just bored of sitting behind a desk. Uh, I just didn't wanna do it for the next... So would've been about 45, 50 years. Um, so I just wanted to try something else. That's... that's a lot of the motivation.**

**625:**

**And then additionally, like I said, uh, like how my friend died. Part of it, like, part of the motivation from that came from, um, just the fact I was like, life's kinda too short to, like, you know. Not really mess around with, but to, uh... Life could be over at any moment. You know?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**625:**

**So you might as well try something, so.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**What motivates you on a daily basis?**

**625:**

**Um... Feel like it's different every day. You know what I mean?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**625:**

**Uh... that's really the best I could say. And a lot of times like when I do stuff, like for example, motivation in BUD/S doesn't really exist. Just discipline. Like, doing what you don't wanna do.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**625:**

**So, yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**And you appreciate that discipline?**

**625:**

**Yeah. Yeah, definitely.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Describe your experience at BUD/S.**

**625:**

**Um... (laughs) I mean just like, just like hell mentally and physically. Um... Yeah. I mean, physically you're just completely broken down, like... I mean, like... Stress fractures and like scraped up everywhere. Everything like that. And then mentally, it just like wears you out. Just sleep deprivation goes, so.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**625:**

**Yeah. I mean...**

**CDR Ledford:**

**How was, uh, and as far as like interaction with your classmates, interaction with instructors.**

**625:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Like, how would you describe that?**

**625:**

**(laughs) Mine was actually very negative. I made a couple mistakes. That, that's almost what led me to drop, but... Basically one time... I was a bell boy, so I was the youngest in the class, uh, for the last ten days or whatever. And like I, uh, so like I was responsible for keeping the bell shined.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**625:**

**And I chose... (laughs) One day I chose to sleep instead of doing that, and yeah. The class paid, like, we paid severely for that. So that, um, that put me in a negative spot in the class.**

**625:**

**And there was another time on the obstacle course where I sorta like, like cheated on an obstacle and, uh, told the instructor that I didn't think it was wrong. Like, I knew it was wrong. I was just like, dumb thing in the moment. And the class also paid for that. So like, I had a very (laughs), uh, you can say negative experience with, uh, my classmates and the instructors compared to what it could have been. Everyone has a negative experience [crosstalk 00:08:07].**

**CDR Ledford:**

**And, and so when you say it's a negative experience, they took it out on you? Like they...**

**625:**

**Yeah, like-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**... harassed you?**

**625:**

**... like, it's not that they harassed me.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Right.**

**625:**

**It's just that, like, 'cause no one's gonna harass you there.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**625:**

**'Cause you still are under a boat and log with them. But it's like, it's just kinda like, what are you doing here type thing. You know what I mean?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**625:**

**Like, and it wasn't everybody. It was some people were more, uh, you could say against me. But even then, they weren't like mean about it. Um, and then the instructors, of course. But that's what they do with everyone.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**625:**

**It's just one thing.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah, exactly.**

**625:**

**For me, it was just that thing, so.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Tell me about a time when you had to make a difficult decision at BUD/S and what was going through your mind when you made that decision.**

**625:**

**I mean, just dropping.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**625:**

**Yeah. I imagine that's every answer. (laughs)**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So, what was going through your mind?**

**625:**

**Uh, it was just... It was actually, what happened was, uh... So it was, yeah. It was Monday. We did the obstacle course. And up until that moment, I wasn't thinking of dropping at all. It was same as every other day. I was just saying, whatever. It's another day.**

**625:**

**And then earlier that day for the third time, actually, I made a... I forgot to mention this earlier. I made another mistake where, uh, since I screwed up like the bell that one time, they kinda had it on like extra things I should do. (laughs) Like, uh, keep these monuments and stuff polished in front of the building.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**625:**

**And I messed that up, so, um... (laughs) Like, not that I messed it up, but it wasn't polished enough. So then we got like destroyed that morning for other reasons not related to that. But, you know, that was like one of the many reasons. But then, uh, our class leader said to me, he's like, like, "What are you doing? I thought you were dropping, like if you did something like that again."**

**625:**

**And like right from there, like, it was like just spiraled downhill. I went to lunch and it was sorta like I'm thinking, you know, then I like start thinking about the whole week and I'm like... And once you start thinking that, it's over. So it's just until that realization kicked in about two hours after I started thinking that, that's when I dropped.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So this is the OIC that said this to you?**

**625:**

**No. The, uh, LPO. Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Okay.**

**625:**

**And the thing is, I have like, I had and like still have more respect for him than like anybody in the class. Like, they said to make a [3F 00:11:31]if you're willing to die, like, to do it. And he definitely was. So, yeah. I have a lot of respect for him. And that's why like I took his, like what he said so seriously.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Did he make it all the way through?**

**625:**

**He did. He did it once before, too. And then he got dropped in third phase and he came back and did it again.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Did the OFC make it all the way through?**

**625:**

**No, the OFC got ruled a, a medicaled. He got psyched or something. Or, a [inaudible 00:10:46]**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Uh, is there anything that you would've done differently?**

**625:**

**In terms of what? Like BUD/S, or?**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**625:**

**Okay. Yeah. I would've, those mistakes I talked about, I would not have made them. Like I would have been more basically, um, I should've been more accountable. That's the best way to put it.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Uh, would you ever consider coming back? That something you'd think about?**

**625:**

**Um... Yeah, I would. Because I'm not sure, so that means the answer is yes.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**What practices, uh, physical, mental, or spiritual, uh, did you use if any to push through challenges while you're at BUD/S?**

**625:**

**Uh, I tried to use, like, I tried to like kind of apply like a little bit of stoicism, I would say. Just as much... It, it's hard to do, but I think that's something that, uh-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Like what?**

**625:**

**Just the whole aspect of, uh, like not letting things get to you sort of. Like just, you know, if you have to do surf torture or whatever, just... Like, they told me it's like perception is reality in a way. Like it's only bad because you think about it. But like, if you look at it really objectively, you're just, it's just a cold body, so.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**625:**

**It's just bad if you think it's bad, but.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah.**

**625:**

**It's hard not to think it's bad.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**How did this, uh, experience change you?**

**625:**

**Uh, I would say it gave me a lot of perspective. I'd say that was the biggest change. Perspective just in how hard things are. Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**So all these questions we're trying to get at resilience and-**

**625:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**CDR Ledford:**

**... what it takes getting through. Is there a question that we should've asked that you thing should've been added to this?**

**625:**

**Um... I think you could've asked like, uh... Uh, there is, it's hard for me to describe. Give me like a minute to think about.**

**625:**

**Um... Like how do, how do like, uh, we think that the people that make it through did make it through. You know what I mean? Because we're the ones that see how they make it through.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Oh. How do you guys- oh, interesting.**

**625:**

**Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Yeah. How do you... So...**

**625:**

**Because I answer that question a lot to people. Like I say the guys that make it through, all it really comes down to is how mentally and like hard they are. How mentally tough they are. 'Cause everyone's broken and physically injured and whatnot, but-**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**625:**

**... at the end of the day, they just are the ones that push past it.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**I like that. That's a really good one.**

**625:**

**Good questions.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**All right. That is it. So, um, the last thing I would say. Do you have your phone with you?**

**625:**

**Yes.**

**CDR Ledford:**

**Can you do this survey-**

**625:**

**Mm-hmm (affirmative).**

**CDR Ledford:**

**... and just put the QR code. I'm gonna stop-**