**TRANSCRIBER NAME: ENS Taylor**

**Date: 1/29/2022**

**Participant #: 646**

Interviewer (Code in blue): Deirdre

Participant (Code in black): #646

Here, we go, oops. I got a name at 646. Okay. Can you tell me what's your name? What's your number is and is it okay if we record?

Yes ma'am.

Okay. And what phase, what class were you in and then what phase did you leave?

First.

And then how many weeks ago was it?

A couple of months of a few months ago.

Great. Um, could you take a minute and tell me about your childhood? Like how many kids were in your family? Are your parents still together? Did you move a lot? That kind of stuff?

Um, I have one brother and, uh, my parents are divorced. They were divorced. And so. Maybe two, three years old. So I was just a baby. So most of my life, my parents were divorced and, uh, I would always move it back and forth cause they're both military. So we move in every other state here and there, back and forth with families and designing and all of that. And, uh, never really got the whole. Combined family experience that mother, father together and all that. It never really.

Okay. Can I ask you one thing? I'm from Florida. You're from Texas. Do you mind if we take off our masks, if you don't feel comfortable, then I'll leave it on. But if you don't care, let's just take it off. Thank you. Okay. So you have, um, so you moved around back and forth with your parents. Were they both in the Navy or both navy?

Both Navy, uh, my mother, she did all 20 years in retired. Matt, uh, my father, he, he finished his contract and he didn't do an another, um, you needed to re-enlist because he wanted to take care of my brother and I, while my mom was overseas. So he did that. Yeah.

And then when my mom got back, um, um, me and my brother moved back with her and then maybe it was in B, it was coming to middle school. We, um, we moved back to Texas because a, to be close to our dad and our mom was about to get deployed to Africa for over a year. So, uh, we moved back with our dad and, uh, our mom left and we just stayed with our dad until my brother and I graduated high school.

Wow. Okay. Um, if you had to describe your personality with three traits, what would you say?

Um,

Um, loyal, honest and committed.

Nice. Okay. Thank you. Um, what did you do the last five years prior to this training? Like did you go to high school or college?

I went to high school and then, uh, I completed high school and my, my, both, my parents wanted me to try out college to see if I liked it or not, because I was always set on military.

So they wanted me to get the feeling of college. Then I went to college and…

Where'd you go?

I went to, uh, Tammy, international university and. I, it was, it was pretty cool for an experience, but it just wasn't for me in particular. So I was like, um, that's okay. I'll just, like I told my parents, they understood that it wasn't for me.

Like they even said it's not for everybody. So I asked them, I'm like, is it okay if I just join the service? And they're like, yeah, it's okay. And so I, um, enlisted. I never had any problems since.

So you enlisted right out of high school. Okay. So, um, or you tried college for what?

A semester and then I didn't like it.

So I enlisted like…

So do you feel like you had any in your childhood or before you joined, before you came to buds, did you have any life changing experiences that like made you just have any shifts in your life?

Uh, not that I know.

No, that's fine. Some people do some people don't. Um, so I assumed you joined the Navy because both your parents were in it, or

I actually, I joined the Navy in part because of that.

And, um, I was trying to, like, I wanted to do a job that I knew nobody in my family would want. And so what better job then trying for the buds and seals? Oh, I, um, I was planning on doing that, but, um, before I was doing that, it was like maybe middle school. Cause that's when I thought of doing buds. Right. I thought like, oh, that's crazy.

Right.

But I was halfway between buds in the Marines. Right. Cause I had no family members in the Marines. But unfortunately my cousin, she went into the Marines and I was like, well, that option is gone. So I just, um, I, um, I was like, okay. And then she, um, she was in the Marines for a bit, but she got out and I was like, I can still do it, but I'd rather do.

Um, but right, because I asked my mom and my dad about it and they're like, yeah, they said that they, they saw it, but they never wanted to do it. Cause. They were scared of it. And they said that, yeah, I like life. I liked my life. I was like, okay. And when they said that I was actually super curious and interested in and, um, so ever since I've been just,

So you got a contract when you enlisted to go, come to NSW. Okay. Great. And what would you say motivates you on a daily basis?

Okay. My family, because my family they've always made a point that there, they would always be there support like me and my brother showed me. They would always be there to support me and all the, like the issues that I would have just with, if any issues came up, I would always talk to them about it and they would be like, it's okay. Just keep going and keep going. And I'm like, I am. They've said it's not a big problem. You've been through worse. Okay. So I would just keep going and going and just knowing that my family is there with me, then I'm just like, okay, I got this. So I just keep on going.

That's great. That's nice to hear. Um, could you, do you mind telling me, what was your experience at buds? Like what led you to leave and what just what happened?

Yes. Uh, my experience with buds was, um, actually I enjoyed it, right. It was. Like there were just, it was, it was really tough obviously as he was actually physically and mentally challenging. But I think the problem, well, actually I, my experience, I actually had a really good experience with it and like I learned new things.

I. I met new people, made friends and like, I got a, like a bigger view on what people's backgrounds were like. They're like, oh yeah. I came from like a small town. I was this. And that's why I made close friends with them. And, um, you just learn new things from people and the training itself, and you learn to control like, like, I guess your stress and you overcome things and you're just confidence. Just skyrockets. And that's how it wasn't me. I, I was nervous about things at first, cause I never did it before. And when I did it, it was like the best thing I've ever experienced. So I just continued doing it and doing it and it was fun for me. And then, um, when, uh, we made to actual buds itself, I, uh, I was good in the training. I was confident. And then, um, I noticed I lacked in, uh, I was lacking a lot in logs cause. I, so I was unfairly skinnier than most of the people in buds. And, uh, I never really did, uh, like weightlifting in the gym. I did more so body weight training. So, uh, that was probably a little problem for me coming here. So, um, buds, um, and, uh, we were doing logs and, uh, I noticed that I was lacking a lot and. Guys were struggling. And I was worried that would hurt the guy, my right. Cause like we're near the end of the log and that's where the heavier it gets. And I was struggling because I didn't know if I was carrying mountain weight or not. And uh, and they were saying, just keep on, keep on going. Right. And they're like, you need to help us more. And I'm like, okay, I'm helping. So I put all the effort into it and my friend's like, you're good. You're good. Like, don't worry because when you're under the log, everyone's emotions are not there. Right. You got guys who get angry real quick. You got guys who like, get scared. You got guys who like, just sometimes cry it's happened. And so, uh, yeah, we had a couple angry guys on the dialogue again. I kept the Pata and then my friend, I'm like, you know, I'm trying right. And he's like, nah, it's okay, man. Just do you. I see you're putting the effort in. You're good. I'm like, all right. So I just listened to my friend and he was like, dude, just don't listen to them. Cause he mentioned, he's like, dude, they're not even caring. They're waiting. It doesn't matter. It's like, we're all on the same boat here. All right. So I kept on doing it. And the, um, after we secured it and uh, like I think it was the following day. Our instructors were talking to us about, uh, like, uh, like he was just being, he was like, yeah, I'm being honest with you guys. Like yeah, you guys, you need to, um, there's times where if you feel you're not confident in like a specific aspect, it's 100% completely okay. To, to quit and then come back like quitting it's it's inevitable, depending on what it is. Cause we have one of the highest attrition rates. So. So it's not a problem. You quit and come back it's we won't hate you or anything. Well, you're more respectable or we, you earn our respect more. If you quit, then you heard someone else.

Right.

And I was thinking, I'm like, okay. Right. And I was thinking I'm pretty small. Right. So I was 50 50. I was like, if I keep going, I could possibly injure someone else. If we do all this again. And if I quit, no, I can. I guess, go ahead, train, like, like a focus, more on lifting carrier focused more on the training since I have like a kind of view on what it is.

I can train more in that aspect so I can be, I guess, better when I, for when I come back. Cause I w I'm planning on coming back. Right. And I like, when I quit, I was like, all right. I was a little upset when I quit. Right. Cause I was like, oh man, like you, cause when you go in, you always automatically think count, quit Macklin, quit.

Right.

That's everyone's mindset when you quit. You're just like, oh man, like what did I do?

Right.

If you feel like you, you let down a lot of people like your family. And like, I, uh, I immediately called my family and like, am I'm sorry, but I quit. Right. And they're like, no, no, no, no. It's okay. Like. Way further than I would have.

And I'm just like, yeah, I don't know. And so they're like, they always reassured me. They're like, it's okay. I'm proud of, they're still proud of me and this and that. And they, um, they asked me like, what are you gonna do? I'm like, now that I know the. The view of the I'm gonna go train and I'm going to come back whenever I can.

In two years, three years, whenever I feel I'm physically and mentally ready to come back, I will come back and be better than that. Right. And my parents are like, And then, so they like, like, right. Whenever I told my parents that they were like, agreed, they're like, okay, sounds, sounds great. And I'll just like, this is what you do.

Right.

And then, uh, when you like, so from now on, you can just pick a job. And while you're doing that job, just like focus on the, the job itself and then like do your training and just maintain your training and just be positive and don't become negative. And I was like, okay, that's I can do that.

Okay. Um, was there a time at buds where you had to make a difficult decision? And can you give me an example? Like what went through your mind and maybe it was quitting? I don't know.

I think, uh, uh, I think a difficult decision I did in buds. It, it had to, and sorry, I'm hungry. It had to. Whenever, um, my buddy got injured cause of my, he was like, we were always together and all that. And he actually got an injured, um, on the first day. And he was, he was like, man, just like, I want to keep going. And I was like, dude, like, I want to help you through this.

And he's like, dude, just end. He told me to just go and worry about myself and. I didn't want to, I wanted to also bring him with me and I wanted to bring him as far as I could. And, um, he was like, no, man, like, I don't want to bring you guys down and this and that. And I'm like, like this feeling, if I would have like, like I felt like, I feel like I would have abandoned him if I would have just left him there.

So I didn't want to like, just leave him there. So, um, I was like, dude, I don't want to leave you here. And he's like, dude, just go. It's okay. It's I'm okay. I'll I'm okay with it. Like I don't, I'd rather quit and let you guys keep going. And so I think that was probably one of the harder things I had to do months as I had to leave my friend behind and keep going forward.

But I mean, it says it's like people, like they, they say don't get too attached to people in like, I guess in the selection process. Many people quit and this and that. And I'm just like, yeah, but it's still good to have like good friends around. So I was like, all right. So I think that was kind of harder for me because me and him were closer than, uh, I was closer to him than most people there's maybe like less than a handful of guys who I was actually close with.

So, I mean, it's, it is what it is. I just, I thought that was pretty tough time. He left, he left, um, he got injured on the first day and he left. Um, I think he left at the beginning of the second day because they didn't get rolled

or did he?

No, he, he quit because, um, he quit because he, um, cause he told me after that he, uh, he said, yeah, my leg was just gone.

Like he, it was completely bruised around it and then his knee locked out and he couldn't properly walk. And he was like, yeah. And if my leg got hurt just by. Doing whatever I did, then it would have been a lot worse. My body just wasn't physically ready. And so I'm like, yeah. So he's like, it's better than just like, know your limits.

So he's like, he told me, he's like, dude, I'm just gonna, I'm just gonna quick. And I'm going to come back. I'm going to come back 10 times stronger. And so I was like, okay. And then I continued my day in training and they equipped maybe like, uh, The following day after him. Cause, um, cause we did laws on Monday.

I mean him both secured logs, Tuesday morning, he quit and you told me Monday, Michael was going to quit. I'm like, just wait until Tuesday night when he gets. How it goes. And so he wait until Tuesday morning and that's whenever he, his knee was completely locked down, you couldn't bend it. So he's like, yeah, man, just, just keep going, go on without me.

So that's where I had to make the decision to leave. And so he critiques the morning and then Wednesday morning comes up and, um, well, Tuesday night they told us they just, they, uh, charged, told us about, um, like it's okay, quitting. You can just come back, train, come back to, it can be, have more experience in it.

Help people out more. And they as well as Tuesday night and I thought about it and a Wednesday morning came up and I want to see what my standing was. And, uh, I, uh, I was like, okay. And then Wednesday morning, I just, I told my friend, I'm like, you know what? I'll probably just quit now. So I don't have to worry about like hurting anybody in the upcoming future because you're going to have to do logs again.

And that's the only thing that was running through my mind. Having to do logs again, logs. And that was probably my one biggest issue in buds. It was logs. Like I, the other things were tough and really exhausting, but I didn't have a problem with them. I know I can go through with those, but just almost cause it was so like physically, mentally demanding, I just couldn't keep up with it.

And like, I just, I like, I was just, I wasn't ready for it. Okay.

So was there anything you would've done differently during the buds knowing what you know now?

No only want to know. Now I would've focused more on like, uh, I guess I would have amped up like more like weight training and, and all that because it's, it's more so like a lot of running and all that, but it's, it's a lot of upper body as well.

Like you need a strong upper body and lower body. You need a strong body to do it. Like, it's not like cow, it's not, body-weight based, you're carrying other people. You're carrying logs boats. So it's physically and mentally demanding. And so you have to understand that it's not just body weight training.

I just assumed, like I came in completely unprepared, like I was unprepared, but I still tried to try to make the best of it. And so. No, I believe, I think that next time I'm going to come in more prepared for next time. And if anything, I just,

and the next question, I think I know the answer to, but I'll ask it anyway.

Would you ever consider coming back because many of the successful people who graduated, we asked them and they have come before left, gone back to the fleet, got really more prepared and then came back and graduated. Would you ever consider coming back?

Yes. I would 100% consider coming back because, so I, I thought, um, cause I asked a few of my friends and just people like what they want to do, but my mind was set on coming back and I think that's why it took it better than a lot of people quit because, um, because when I quit, I was like, dang, what do I do now?

Right.

And I was thinking. I can start getting ready to come back. Right. And that's, that's immediately what I thought, but a few other people, they were just like broken down by it and I'm like, just what are you? And I asked them, what did they plan on doing? They said they didn't know. And so I told him, I'm like, dude, I'm going to come back and go, no, I don't want to, how do I experience this again?

And it's like, a lot of people don't want to come back and others do like my friend who got injured before me, he said he was gonna come back. And, um, that was like, okay, so. I know a lot of instructors even told us. They said that you got a lot of instructors here who didn't make it on the first time you got all these famous seals and all these people, they didn't make it on their first attempt.

They made made it on their second attempt, third attempt and like when we all had quit. And so we all just, when they told us that we, we all like me and my buddy, we had like, The spark that just let us in. We're like we still have chance. Right. So we looked at each other and we're like, we still have a chance.

So we, um, we went and, um, I was telling my buddy I'm like, I'm going to come back. So our plan was, um, cause we talked to an instructor after we quit and he was like, um, we talked to in Chardonnay and we got briefed. And then, um, they were saying like, what do you, what are you plans on? Like, I'm going to go into the fleet and then I'm going to try.

Get more experience with the fleet. I have like an understanding of the fleet and also a whole understanding of NSW. So I can have like experience in both kinds of things. Right. And instructors all like, yeah, that's actually not bad. Like most of us have experienced the fleet and it's like, not every, most people don't make it on their first shot.

Most people make on their second or third attempt. And I was like, okay. So I 100.

Okay, thank you. What practices did you use to push through any challenges? Did you have any physical, mental, spiritual practices that helped you?

So I I'm more so focused cause like a lot of things are challenging in the training and what I did to avoid like any issues with my body and all that I would try to stretch the most I could.

And then I would try. Take time to just like, relax. Like, so I would either like say I would just go to my room and just like, sit down probably and think it over. Like whenever I would have free time, I would probably think it over. And then I would like, um, I would work on like year and like we had the weekend prior to for buds.

So I was preparing my helmet and then we had plenty of times. Like prepare yourself. So I prepared all my stuff and I had two days to spare before Monday started. And so what I did, I just, and it was not just budget was like, um, orientation, like, um, and all that. And like, it's, it was all very helpful.

Cause a lot of people quit during orientation too. So I was like, all right. So, so what I learned is like how to control, like your control, your breathing, and like your heart. Drops and you just get this sense of ease and relaxation. I just, and how did you learn that the instructors, um, mentioned it like many times and, uh, um, when we're around some other instructors from like different phases would pop by and they'd be like, oh, Oh, like they like, so from a device duty, I remember he came up to me and a few other dyes and, um, he told us, he's like, Hey, like what really will help you guys with the cold?

And just like negative thoughts of anything is meditation kind of thing. Or just breathing in general, like try, like practice your breathing.

What do you mean?

Like, like breath holds. He's like, no, like you can breath hold right to like a new breath hold training to like ex like expand your lung capacity.

You can do all this to prevent cold. You can like, cause breathing helps with many things. You can like your, your carbon dioxide resistance goes up and all that. So he told us, he's like, don't worry. Cause he wasn't a buzzing started. He wasn't SQT. So he was more relaxed with us and he told us, Hey, you guys don't have to worry. I'm relaxed.

Okay.

So he told us relax. Okay. Cause we were very, uh, stiff and alert around him. He's like, dude, just relax. I'm not going to hurt you guys. And so we were calm and he talked to us and he told us, he was like, yeah, just you guys are young. Just take your time. And. Well, I did help me cause I didn't make it on my first time I made on my second time.

And my second time, what I learned is like, like breathing just deep breaths in, through your nose, hold it and just let it out of your mouth. And he said it, it's almost exactly meditating. And he's like, just clear your mind or think of like happy thoughts or whatever, but. Just picture something that you like and do it.

And then, um, I was like, okay, so me, I like like nature. So I would like like forests and like ocean sides and all that. So I would just think of that. And I would just deep breaths take deep breaths, or just put a video on there, just like the wildlife alive. And I would just, just take deep breaths and calm.

And I noticed that like, I was way more relaxed and I wasn't. Like nervous or alert or anything like that. It was just nice and it easy.

Okay. Thank you. Um, how do you think this whole experience has changed you as a person?

It gave me a bigger view on like, I guess, um, just give me an understanding on what the training is and how people are, and a lot about myself because.

Um, so when I came in I was like, oh man, this is going to be really hard. And all this made me scared. I was mainly like, I had a little bit of like a fear of me. And then I was always worried about other things. And then at a certain point in the training, I was like, what am I doing? Right. And so I, something changed and I just, just stopped worrying about other things than focus for the training.

And then I got into the groove and I, and then I just realized that it's not so hard or scary. It's not scary. Cause you have, you have the instructors there who will save you. If anything bad happens. You have medical staff on standby the entire time with you. So you don't have to worry. And I've never like swam in the ocean before.

I've never slept. So like, I've been to beaches on the like coasts, but I never went far out to swim. So going that far out, the, the only thing I was thinking about is I'm going to get eaten by a shark. Right. That was the only thing I thought about. And me and a lot of my friends who weren't from ocean near ocean areas, that's all we thought about.

We thought about sharks hit I'm like, and then the instructor, like, cause I was talking to my friend about sharks. Well, the instructor's heard, he's like, oh, don't worry. Don't worry. When the shark bites you will, we'll save you from the shark. If you're missing a leg, we'll still save you. Okay. And so were we, we started laughing, right.

And he's like, you see just you're laughing right now. So you're not scared anymore. And I'm like, oh, that was funny. But you exactly. The all this time I was here. I, I could, I could known you. Remember if anyone was even attacked by a shark sharks will come up to you. You will see sharks as the ocean.

You'll see sharks, you'll see dolphins, you'll see everything, but sharks won't attack you unless provoked by you. Or they think you're a threat. And so just easily just calm, calmly can just continue don't freak out or anything. And so I was like, okay. And then, uh, it wasn't until later and instructor showed us a video of us in the ocean, and then he moved the carrots that are though the sharks living right there next to us.

And we didn't realize it. And that, that didn't scare me. It like when I saw that, I was just like, so the sharks aren't interested in us. Like they were curious that it was just curious shark and just swam and then just swim away. And once I saw that, No, don't worry about sharks anymore. So like the entire, like fear of sharks just went away almost completely.

They still had sharks in the back of my head. Just like I'll probably bump into a shark here and there maybe. But like, I was never really like when a document shark created, never really thought of that anymore.

That's helpful. Now, what event did you struggle with the most?

I believe been a struggle with the most, in both was logs.

Logs was my, I guess you can say, like you're my weakness. Okay. Okay.

And did you think your class liked you?

Yes. From what they told me, they said that I, because I never gave him any problems. I never gave anybody any problems. I did what I was told. I, I did my job, like to the best of I can and, uh, to the best of my abilities and everyone that I was with, they saw that.

Right.

And they're like, And then when I told them the reason I quit and they're like, dude, don't worry about it. Like logs it's it was tough. Like logs is not going to be easy. It's tough. And so they said that, um, like it's okay, like it's it's okay. You did the best you couldn't do. We saw it. Right. And I was like, okay.All right. So that's when I hit like, understood. Like it's okay. I quit from it, but I still, like, I can get more experience on it. So yeah.

Do you think there's anything different about the people who make it? What do you think made them successful? What made them more sus more successful?

I believe the guys who make it I'm there just more prepared and they have like, uh, the people, I think they make it because they're more prepared.

They have a better sense of leadership and like, they they're like. Because I know a lot of the guys who made it in our class, they were always like together. Right. And so I think that they had like a connection to each other that helped them make it way further than other people who were like alone in the individuals.

Sure. Yeah. That makes sense. What else should we have asked you? Like, what would you wish you would have known a year ago before you started this?

I wish I would've known that it was. Like, cause I was like a year ago when I was in the train station, like ARRA was, I just didn't listen. I told my, my recruiter what I want to do.

Um, they just, just gave me like, Like the, the smallest details about it. And even looking about in the logs and law, they said laws, boats. Right. But there wasn't any specifics on it. And so they said that, um, he said, if you can do a lot of push-ups pull-ups and sit-ups, then you can like do logs. You can do boats.

And that's not the case. Cause doing all that, it's its own thing. And they said that if you can do a lot of all that, then you can make it through, but sorry, but you need to be able to carry. A lot of weight, not just yours, but your buddies. Cause if your buddy's injured, you need to be able to carry them in buds.

The instructors made you understand that. So they made you carry people. You had to do many squats with them and they say, well, can't even do these squats with these guys without a kid on, without your gun, without their gun, without all their stuff. Cause they have 30 pounds added to them and you have 30 pounds that too, you need to be able to carry that.

And run with them on your back, out of like a gunfighter situation. And that's what I understood. I'm like, oh man, this is not just about body weight because they focused it mainly on running and body weight training. It's understandable, but I'd rather have them tell me that, like you needed to be able to carry.

Like physically carry other people and all that. I wasn't told that any of that. So I came in here blind side, so that's what,

Okay. Well, that's going to be very, super helpful. Well, um, I'm going to stop this.