**TRANSCRIBER NAME: ENS Taylor**

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**Participant #: 647**

Interviewer (Code in blue): Deirdre

Participant (Code in black): #647

So, this is January 5th, 2022. This is Celeste. And I'm here with participant three or 647. So, um, first question is, what was your last class at buds?

My last class was 350.

Okay. And when did you, did you classes before

I, um, I was in class 348, uh, prior.

Okay. Yeah. Did you get, so you got rolled?

I got rolled back. Yeah. From 348, right before hell week. And then I was in PTRR, um, for two months or so until 350.

Okay.

Yeah, injury. Uh, I got rolled back, um, for not passing the drown proofing portion. Okay. Um, and I was sick at the time as well. So it was kinda kind of combo.

In 3, 350. What was your last phase or when, what phase did you leave?

Uh, I left him first phase, uh, right before the, on Monday, the third week.

Okay. Yeah. And how many weeks ago was that?

Uh, I was in September, early, September, early August? Yeah. So about four or five. I’ve been here for awhile.

Yeah. Yep. Any sense of when. Yeah, I'm leaving, uh, mid January. So where are you going next?

I'm going to Pensacola rescue swimmer school.

Yeah. Okay. That's great. That's fun.

Yeah. I'm excited about it.

Uh, so, so, uh, Tom, take a minute to tell me a little bit about your childhood brothers, sisters, where you grew up.

Yeah. Uh, I grew up in Woodinville, Washington, so like a small suburban in Western Washington. Uh, I had one younger brother. Uh, I was really active, uh, played sports, growing up football and baseball. Um, had great parents. Uh, my dad served in the army too, so I have a long history of military service and my family.

Um, and then, so I played high school sports, college sports, um, and then got my degree at point Loma Nazarene University here in San Diego.

Okay. Yeah.

So I lived here with my wife and then when I shipped out, I should out of San Diego.

Okay. Yep. So, so were you in the fleet before?

No, I wasn't. I came in as just a I right after I graduated college.I enlisted.

Okay. Yeah.

And then I just came right to buds.

Okay. Yeah. Was there a reason you enlist instead of going into OCS?

Yeah. And you know, I wanted to, uh, get some skin in the game. I wanted to do the job.

Yeah. Okay.

Um, just a little bit different than the job description and, um, yeah, but I learned a lot way, so.

Okay. Yeah. Um, so any sports?

Yeah. So I played football and baseball in high school. Um, and then I played baseball in college for two years, um, at San Diego city college and San Diego state. And then, um, I transferred to point Loma Nazarene. I finished my degree and trained for this space.

What brought you to San Diego from Washington?

Uh, baseball.

Okay. Yeah.

I had a, I had a, a walk-on spot of city. It was stayed. Okay. So I was on the team for a little bit and then, um, things didn't work out there. So I went to San Diego city college and played college baseball for a couple of years.

Okay. Yeah. Yeah.

So just stay down here.

Got it. Yeah.

So I lived in San Diego for 11 years.

Um, yeah, so, so, uh, know the area.

Yes.

Nice. Yeah, totally.

It is hard to leave, but I love it when we come back.

What about, um, you said you had one brother younger brother, right?

Yeah.

Okay. How much younger?

He is two years.

Two years?

Yeah.

Okay. Um, if you were to describe your personality, like three traits, how would you describe it?

Um, determined, enthusiastic and positive. I would say. Always like that or is that yeah, pretty, I'm pretty across the board. Yeah. I try not to let certain situations get me down. I'm pretty, I like to stay pretty even keeled and cool-headed, um, that's something I just learned as a, as a kid and my life experience growing up.

So know if you, and we talked a little bit about it, but if you kind of walk me back from the last five years of her life, talk me through what you're doing and what you've done with those lessons. Uh, so last five years, um, So I played baseball for two years, um, at junior college. And then basically for the two years, I was at point Loma finishing my degree.

I was training for a buds basically, and then shape, um, swim and running. And then after I graduated, um, from college in 2019, I did a year working construction. Okay. I'm just doing like hard labor and, uh, making sure. And until I was ready to ship. Cause that's when COVID hit. So everything was kind of pushed back.

So I held that job, um, for a year and was training on after work and everything. And uh, yeah, I mean, it was, it was good experience to do that prior to coming here. Cause it definitely prepared me. Yeah. Yeah. And that's where, that's where it got me to here.

How about, is there any sort of like life shaping crucible experiences that you had prior to coming buds?

Uh, I mean, I had a lot of, I had some failures and that definitely like motivated me to work harder. Um, you know, like not succeeding at, uh, San Diego state and getting kind of basically pushed out of the program. Definitely. Like I learned a lot from failing there and then being able to pick myself up and then continue playing baseball at a junior college.

I did like a different level and just kind of doing it all on my own was, uh, definitely like life-changing it was, it was a good experience for me to deal with failure and basically move on from that.

Yeah. Yeah. What, um, what pushed you out of the program?

Uh, so I didn't make the spring roster.

Okay.

And they offered me to stay.

Um, just has a gray shirt basically. So you're not on a team until you try out next year. Um, and so I just, like, I just wanted to play baseball, so I decided to go to junior college route. And then while I was at junior college, I had just to call calling basically to do this and, uh, didn't continue with baseball career.

Yeah. Yeah. So, um, so at that point, when you kind of call him to do this, you hadn't thought about it before.

Oh yeah. I I've always thought about this. Uh, ever since high school, I learned about the, the seals and, uh, having like military history in my family. I always want to know. Um, I just didn't know when, uh, cause baseball kind of prolonged that probably for a good reason.

Cause I probably wouldn't have been ready at 18. Yeah. Um, so coming into the program at like 24 was super beneficial for me having life experience, um, you know, learning how to work out, eat right. Live on your own, all that kind of stuff definitely prepared me.

So, so talk to me a little bit about military experience and your family.

Uh, Basically every man in my family has served. My dad was in Vietnam. My grandpa was in world war two. My other grandpa is in Korea and my grand grandpa was in world war one. Okay. Navy. Uh, so my dad, so my dad, my grandpa, they're all army. Yeah. And then I have a couple of uncles who are Navy. Um, and then my older brother is my half brother.

He was in the Navy as well. Okay. Yeah. Okay. Uh, never thought army. I did, I did, but, um, I wanted to be a seal, so it was kind of a risk to take that, um, considering, uh, it's the only profession in the Navy that really does this type of thing. Um, but I wanted to take the risk, so yeah.

Yeah. It makes sense. Yeah. Um, what motivates you on a daily base?

Uh, I would say my faith and my family, my wife, definitely just wanting to be the best man I can be for, for them and for, you know, my family, my friends too. Um, and just being a godly man.

Yeah. How long have you been married?

Uh, I've been married since may. Is. Wasn't it five months.

I don't know. Seven. Yeah.

It's okay. I've been married so long. You can track. That's great. I've lost track. Um, if you don't mind describing your experience here, but,

uh, yeah, I, I thought it was everything I thought it would be really, um, it was tough, but I was, I was definitely prepared for it. Um, you know, the hardest, the hardest thing for me with.

Getting sick so much. Um, I got pretty sick and four eight, and then, um, you know, it was fine. Like you just kind of keep pushing on. Um, and then that's when I got rolled, uh, for the water evolutions and then getting all healed up, um, to come into five, zero, I was completely healthy. Um, and so I, I just had a good experience.

I think the guys are. Um, I like how the instructors are, you know, on top of you all the time, it's definitely a, a pressure environment. Um, but that's something I really craved at the time, um, and definitely see the benefit of, you know, training. So, yeah.

How'd you prep for buds?

Um, I prep, uh, I've started to do Smith's workouts.

Um, he's a Naval academy guy. Um, So I did that for like three years. Um, so high calisthenics, swimming and running, um, and then like doing manual labor, like my construction job. Just kind of say you just have that experience. Yeah. So that's what I did.

Um, so talk to me a little bit about your experience in 350.

Did you, did you get, uh, so I, I decided to DOR, um, So it was 350 is a lot different than, um, four, eight. It was just more, um, it was warmer. It was a summer class. Uh, so it's a little more intensive on the running side and other weight bearing things. Um, but I had no problem with that. It was just, it was just harder than four eight for sure.

Um, but it was at the time where I was like, you know, I don't know if I'm going to get rolled again, uh, because I wasn't passing the water evolutions. Uh, cause I was really sick and I had a SIPE, um, and they don't really, they don't really diagnose you as much and buzz, you know, it's, it's kind of a, unless you're dying you.

Yeah.

You keep going. Which is I, you know, I respect that I do 100% and I, and I liked that part of it. Um, but that was just kind of, I was really sick and revive zero. And then, um, you know, I was just thinking about my wife in the future. I just didn't want to keep pulling her through more roles and. Just the intensity of buds, um, was kind of tough for me to see the future in the program.

Yeah, I was single. I had private. A little bit easier, but yeah, I've heard different things about it sometimes better to be single some renters, not though. Right. Exactly. And I, and I, I, again, I will say like, I probably wouldn't have made it as far if my wife wasn't there to support that. So it's like, you know, it's kind of a two.

Yeah. It probably just depends.

Yeah, it does.

Yeah. Um, tell me, and I, we may have talked about it already, but tell me about a difficult time. You had to make a difficult to schedule and by your hear buds and walk me through that experience. Like during like an evolution or anything that comes to mind?

Uh, I mean, for the most part, nothing was like, I didn't have to make any difficult decisions during the program. Cause everything's so straightforward. You just kind of grind it out and you just take it one evolution at a time. Um, I think the most difficult was like getting rolled that really, that really stunk a lot because I felt really healthy.

I was ready to go, um, in four eight and then, uh, you know, getting rolled was definitely a tough, because I didn't, I didn't have control of that obviously, but then I had control of leaving and I felt completely fine with that. Like at peace with just separating from the program. Yeah. So I would say that's probably the most difficult thing was just getting rolled, which isn't really a decision I had to make, but there wasn't really anything during buds, like that was like super tough decision-making process.

Okay. Yeah. Was there any points where like crew, you all tried to push somebody out or any of those dynamics?

Uh, yeah. It's definitely, it's definitely prominent in buds. Yeah. Yeah. If you're not, if you're not pulling your weight, um, guys will, I mean, it's pretty cutthroat though. They'll either kick you out or.

You'll just fall out and you'll just run hard enough that fall out the boat. Um, there's many, many circumstances where that happened. Never happened to me. I was always with really good guys and, uh, I always pride myself in carrying my weight and everything. Um, but I did see that a lot. Um, just in the, in the pipeline.

Yeah, it definitely, definitely first phase I saw in both of my classes that guys would, uh, I mean, you just, I mean, at the end of the day, like I would give them. I would give them chances if they were ducking boat, um, to like try to pull their way, but like at the end of the day, like they have to like either make the decision to like, get out of the boat or like quit because they're going to hurt somebody else.

Um, so as long as they were like pulling their weight, there was no issues.

Yeah.

Any different dynamic with that? Between class 3, 4, 8 and 3, 5, 0?

Uh, no. They're about the same, uh, yeah. You know, I would say 3, 3, 5, 0. I had really good boat crews. We were securing races. We were securing a lot of things.

And we, I was, we were Smurfs too. So Smurfs don't usually, uh, secure as much cause we're just smaller. Um, and so I just had great, great group of guys around me and that was tough to leave, but, um, yeah, it was, it was really cool putting out with them and, and, and grinding out with them.

So, um, Anything you would have done differently if that's not a thing?

No. Uh, you know, I would, I would hope to be a little healthier, but that's something you really can't control. Um, but you know, I mean, I would like to pass the, the, uh, you know, the water evolutions first time. Definitely. But everything else? Um, not many the song, I mean, I prepared pretty well, so nothing was too hard.

Yeah. Yeah.

As far as physical evolutions go, I mean, it was definitely difficult, but I was definitely prepared for it.

Yeah.

If given the option when you try to come back.

No, no, no. Uh, you know, I, I, the reason I made that decisions, like that's, I did everything I wanted to do. I've no regrets here.

Um, and I was at peace with it because I know I did everything I could. Um, and just didn't see. The benefit of the future is for my family, just for me staying in the program. Uh, so I want to do something different. Yeah.

Yeah. Excited about where are you on?

Yeah. Yeah. I am. It's going to be some something new and, uh, just kind of carry on and, um, continue the service.

So that's great.

Um, any practices, physical, mental, spiritual that you do to get through challenging challenges?

Absolutely. Um, yeah, I'm a Christian, so, you know, I pray a lot. Um, Honestly, what got me here with all the crazy, just crazy COVID stuff. And, uh, just like getting into the programs. Definitely. It takes a lot of faith and risk.

Um, but yeah, I would visualize, uh, have affirmation, so like positive affirmations. I tell myself, um, visualize a deep breathing, um, meditation, um, Yeah, those were my main things that I used that definitely worked during the program.

Um, prior, um, how did this experience change you as a person, if at all?

Yeah, uh, it definitely showed me what I could do.

Um, show me the resilience that I have that. Just being able to like, you know, you have it, but you never know until you're tested. Um, and so this, this program offered me the opportunity to test my mental and physical abilities and, um, definitely see some benefit and, you know, seeing that and going through two classes and, um, continuing on basically.

Yeah, definitely learned a lot.

Any evolutions that you struggled with? Uh, yeah, so it'd be the drown proofing and the nighttime, and I struggled with those, um, But everything else, uh, was pretty smooth sailing. Like I had good swim buddies. Uh, the four mile was fine obstacle course. Everything else was, uh, pretty easy to be honest, but, um, just like holding my breath with the stuff in my lungs was very tough for me.

Anything you think you could have done to prep for that?

Uh, I guess in practice, cause I guess, I guess practicing. Um, I didn't do a whole lot of breath holding exercises as much as I should have probably, uh, because it's just different when you're healthy and your body's not fatigued to hold your breath for a certain number of time and kind of do certain like knot tying and all that kind of stuff in the water.

But when you're completely fatigued, uh, and your body is just like spent, uh, it's very tough to be hypoxic in the water. Uh, and. For a long period of time and then continue to do that. At least I found, uh, cause your body's just under so much stress.

Yeah. Yeah. Um, how about in both classes? 3, 4, 8, 3, 5 0.Do you feel like your class liked you?

Yeah. Yeah, I think so. Um, it was kind of just quiet and just did my work and, uh, try to be a really good team player. Um, that's kinda how it always been. You know, quiet and have a good buddies and try to put out for the class and do everything I can to, you know, contribute me and asset.Um, so I, I, I do think I was like, yeah.

Great. Any questions I should have asked that I didn't ask?

Uh, no, it's a great job.

Great. I'm going to turn.