**TRANSCRIBER NAME: ENS Kacor**

**Date: 1/27/2022**

**Participant #: 660**

Interviewer (Code in blue): CDR Andrew Ledford

Participant (Code in black): #660

**Interview Guide**

**OK, do you mind if I record this, this I can't keep notes as fast as you're going to talk to me, no, you look.**

**I’m a pretty slow talker, it's OK, you know**

**You what? Pretty slow talker OK. 660 so I got this and this; signed this already. I really appreciate you doing this, um It's a huge help for us. So it's January 5th, 2022. This is Andrew Ledford. I'm here with 660, and what, what phase did you leave? I mean first Phase, BO, second phase?**

**After first Phase I left**

**First Phase, and you were 351?**

**No. I was originally 341.**

**341**

**And then 344, 46, and then 47**

**Ah, you try to hit them all. 46 and 347.**

**Yes**

**Um, so 341, how far did you get through?**

**It was in the the second week I cracked my L4, and ruptured my L5**

**Cracked L3, L4, OK. And that was in? The second week, you said, second week of first phase?**

**Yeah**

**Got it and 344 , then you healed, went to 344**

**Kind of, the, COVID hit in March of 2020. I never saw a I never saw a specialist or a doctor, and all the ortho clinics were closed, and uh after fighting tooth and nail for an actual consult, they told me that my uh my spine had fused to where if they were to operate it would damage me or maybe it could damage me further, so they asked me what I wanted to do, if I wanted to try again or go for shots or surgery, but, caveat to getting treatment was that I would get dropped from the program, and I said put me back in 44, Um I got, I was hospitalized with a swimmer's induced pulmonary edema.**

**Geez**

**And uh then in 46, I was quarantined for COVID, but I also got, I got SIPE again and they, uh, sent me back to the hospital for that, and then in 47 I got rhabdomyolysis, I got a concussion, and I got sick again. If you have any interest, my file is over at BUD/S medical, and they're they they're basically using me as like Ground Zero for SIPE here, it's kind of nuts**

**And everything that you could possibly get from here you, you covered it all**

**I got everything, I did my damnedest.**

**So how far along with you in 347?**

**347 was the 2nd week.**

**Second week.**

**I didn't make it out of first phase. Something always came up.**

**Right. Can you tell me a little bit about your childhood like Siblings, parents together as you move around a loot, in sports?**

**No siblings, except I have a foster brother that we picked up in high school. He's a good guy. He was in the army uh, actually, um he's 27, medically retired for, something he picked up on deployment. Um, but, anyways, yeah I don't have any siblings. My parents divorced when I was six, I did not live in the United States until I was about 8 years old.**

**Hmm, where were you?**

**I was in Africa, Korea, and Germany and then, uh, after my parents, after my mother moved back to the states, I was back and forth between Africa and the state of Georgia, where I'm from. Um my dad lived in Cameroon, my mother lived in Atlanta, and that continued until I was about 15 or 16 and then the Nigerian civil war popped off and refugees started flowing into Cameroon and my mom didn't want me around that, so I stopped going back.**

**Interesting, okay. Um, all these previous experiences in your life are, which ones, if there are any that shaped you, like, are there any experiences that really molded you and who you are?**

**Uh, really my dad, most of my family was in the military, and I kinda always knew I’d try to serve in some way, civil or military. I've always wanted to give back and I still do. So, if you want a broad brush answer, that’s kinda it, but uh, living in Africa, uh if you've ever been?**

**Yeah.**

**Yeah, You kinda know, there's something different about it and uh it kinda of shifts your perspective a little bit when you see a place like that and I knew that this job, uh, there's a certain section of this job that takes you back to Africa and I wanted to go back. So I wanted to, I wanted to see home again. That’s kind of what, it was kind of like a second home for me.**

**Yeah. You kind of answered this a little bit already, describe your background that led you to join the Navy. I mean**

**I think background and it led me to join the Navy, um, I had, I've always wanted to come do this, actually, I, uh, I heard about it when I was very young, uh, living in Germany. My dad had a couple of friends that were, um, uh, Fleischman, frogman, German frogman, and, uh, they were really cool. Um, great. Uh, I was too young to really absorb information, but, uh, she could, I guess you could say they were kind of early role models that were not heritage parent. Um, and that's how I first heard about it. I've got old photographs of, my dad was kind of involved in special operations too. Um, and old photographs, family meetings and learning about my family history and all the things that, uh, you know, you could do with your life and your military. After doing enough research decided this is what I wanted to do. Um, I was actually planning, I’m 29 now. I was planning, I was going to, I was, I was in line to, uh, come and do this when I was 22. My dad got sick and I took over household and I became his caretaker, and that's set things back a long time, but I’m here now.**

**Uh, I I've missed this question, two questions actually. Um, if you had to describe your personality in three traits, what would it be?**

**Uh, unassuming, you know, a lot of people, um, have told me that I'm unassuming; I don't really know how to take that. I try not to describe myself. That's more than I've heard. Um,**

**admittedly, like, maybe I can be a little intense. Um, I care a lot about working hard…It's a family thing. When I was in the United States, away from my dad, my uncle was kind of my, uh, father figure, and he was, he was a blue collar construction worker. I started working for him for a year early and he taught me how to, you know, really care about doing a good job. Um, tried to carry that with me. I don't know if that. I guess, is that too ?**

**Perfect.**

**(laugh) We can count that as three**

**Unassuming, intense, working hard, doing a good job**

**I, uh, you know, I'm, I'm not trying to, I don't want, I don't like talking about myself. I'm just an open book, It's a survey. And I've actually had to do this survey before, except it wasn't with the university or the academy. It was somebody from the actual program trying to figure out how retention might work.**

**Yeah. Interesting.**

**This is all the same stuff that he has are all the same questions he asked me.**

**Yeah. Um, going back five years, how would you describe your, what did you do five years prior to coming to training? Like go through your high school then**

**prior to**

**Well, your’re 29, so going back to 24, when you're 24, 23**

**I was 24 I was working on my second degree**

**Second degree?**

**I guess, um, I have, I got an associates in education and then I got my bachelor's in political science and with secondary and foreign languages. I was a teacher, well a teacher for about four years, almost five.**

**What did you teach?**

**French.**

**You taught French. Where'd you teach it?**

**Well, I taught French and I taught English. I taught French at Wilson Creek Elementary in Georgia, as well as a substitute for several private Christian schools, and I taught English for the Center of Pan-Asian community services, um, working, I guess, for the um, 4CPAX is the acronym teaching all ages, English, but mostly adults who are working on their citizenship.**

**So how long did you do that for altogether? The teaching repeat?**

**I would, I would cap it at like four years**

**four years, huh.**

**Six, if you include the, uh all this stuff, all this stuff we had to do while we were getting certified going through the, the degree.**

**So you finished high school, you go continue to get your bachelors, uh, or your associate first.**

**Yeah.**

**Where'd you go for that?**

**I'm to the new Georgia perimeter college. Now, a part of Georgia state.**

**Okay. Okay.**

**If you, if you look up George Perimeter, you're gonna find Georgia state**

**Georgia state. Yeah. Got it. And then you got your BS and poly psy from where?**

**From Georgia state**

**Oh, from Georgia state as well. Okay. So you finished that and then you do your teaching for four years.**

**Mmhmm, I also had, uh, I had a, I have my own business. I did a tree removal and landscaping**

**how long did you do that?**

**Most of college and pretty much until I joined the military, it was um part of my duties working for my uncle, started working for my uncle when I was 14, doing landscaping, uh, demo, you know, knocking down walls because you know what, 14 year old kid doesn't like to swing a hammer.**

**Yeah.**

**Um, but I got into the landscaping part of it, and then after college, I started my own thing with my neighbor across the street. Um, a good friend of mine kept doing that until he split off to do his own roofing company, but, um, my uncle's construction company would hire my landscaping, hire his roofing, hire somebody else's painting… this little mafia of stuff that we could all get done on one job site.**

**And so you did that after teaching as well, so in between teaching and BUD/S?**

**uh, yeah, in between teaching it and BUDS. In between and during, um, I wasn't teaching every day being a substitute and, and, um, the private schools, uh, they do block scheduling. Surely, you understand how that works as a professor?**

**Yeah, got it. Okay. Do any of those experiences, um, did they have impact on your training?**

**Um, I don't know. Training just seems like a hard day's work, and when you're working, when you've been working construction for a while, it doesn’t seem too different, you know, labor intensive, and make a whole lot of connections, um, to my life before and during training. Um, but I definitely had to, um, because I got, because I got the injuries that I did and the different things that happened, um, I don't think I could have pulled from any my life experience or any kind of traditional, uh, life lessons to deal with that; I kind of had to learn on the fly.**

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

**On a daily basis?**

**Yeah.**

**Now, um, being in a holding pattern? On a med board. Um, the thing that motivates me now is bouncing back from everything that's happened to me and going back to leading a fulfilling life or finding something that will surpass my expectations of graduating from this program, because I've been in Cornado for about two years now, and when you get here versus, having spent time here. You work it, work it up into some kind of, heated, like some kind of monster, and, um, but monster, like I used to, I used to think that I was never going to get over this, having not completed this, but now I know that the best thing in life for me is to find something that's going to make me happier than this, and, uh, I know it's out there.**

**Yeah.**

**So it's just a matter of. You know, another, another hard day's work, I guess. I don't know.**

**And can you describe your experience at buds?**

**Uh, That's kind of a broad question, Is there anything you'd like to start with?**

**uh, interaction with your classmates, interactions with instructors?**

**How was your experience?**

**Inner peer…well, I can't talk about mine, that’s why I'm curious about yours.**

**(laugh) Uh, well, I can't imagine it was much different. Um, the first class was, I mean, being a rollback you kinda, kinda get used to it, but you never get used to it. The first experience was awesome, I loved it. I, I was, I didn't feel like I was working a day in my life, when I was in there. Um, and, and I didn't feel like I was working any of the other classes; I loved every second of it. Um, I remember I laughed a lot. I laughed a lot. People always say, why are you laughing? Shut up. (laugh) Um, I cared, I still care…a lot about um, being on time being clean, being orderly, and uh, being capable. Um, I've never, I never failed a, uh, personnel inspection, never failed a room inspection. Uh, at least none of my, I can't say the same about my roommates. Sometimes it just happens and you know, that's just the nature of the beast, but I never failed, um, a timed evolution. I took pride in that. I worked hard to achieve that. Only time I ever failed the time evolution was after my concussion and I wasn't running, I was running at a zigzag. Um, got hit with the jet ski. So…**

**You got hit with jet ski, that's what caused your concussion?**

**Yeah, it was, uh, it was an accident, it was a complete accident. Uh, I was so, it’s kinda, it's wild. Uh, I was, uh, doing a, there was, it was an emergency evacuation. My lungs had closed, uh, and they had me on the back board of the jet ski.**

**Yeah.**

**And, um, one of the support boats, uh, had created a wake between the jet ski and land.**

**Yeah**

**The jet ski, I don't know, it was foggy and this was, the swim had been, th e swim that we were doing was rescheduled from the day before, where it was white cap swells and, you know, raining sideways with hail. Um, It was a foggy day and he, and he caught a wave, the jet-ski was airborne and came down near the back board. You're carrying it with you, the jet ski, you know, catches that resistance of the water**

**You kept going?**

**Yeah, I kept going off the backboard, cracked my head on the jet ski um, so that was an interesting day. Uh, gollee sorry.**

**Yeah.**

**Back to back on topic. Um,**

**And so that they, uh, at that point with the concussion and you had rhabdo as well ?**

**Yes, um, it was in the, was actually, so my experience with first phase and the cadre. And uh, you know, being a student in phase, was excellent. I loved it, and my, and my instructors were hard. They were hard, fair, funny, and qualified. Uh, you know, I learned a lot from them and being here long enough, they kinda got to know me and I kinda got to know them as much as you can.**

**Yeah.**

**When you're doing that, I don't pretend to know any of them. Um, but medical, uh, is atrocious. It's really, really bad. The, when I got rhabdo. Um, I got the concussion and they sent and they, uh, I was, and they had, I got the concussion and I went to medical the next morning am my arms were cranked, I couldn't, you know, when you get rhabdo, you can't move, and I, you know, hobbling like a half half-day cockroach and they give me two cups of Gatorade or a Pedialite, or whatever. Tell me to pound that and, uh, just wait a little bit, and I was there for two hours before somebody fuckin, some, I don't know, some intern, uh, finally, he saw me passed out on the gurney, Um, I asked him if, and he said, yeah, you can go home now, and I said, uh, you know, I can't move, can I just stay here for a little bit? If something, you know, if I, if I, you know, what, if something, like I thought I thought it was going to die or something, that's what it felt like, and, uh, I asked if I could just stay on the gurney, stay on the bed and he’s like, yeah, uh, okay, sure, bye, and they left and no one came to check on me for another three hours and an orderly, came in to take out the trash, or I'm sorry, not an orderly, um, intern, uh, some second class and saw me in and like poked me, and said, hey man what are you doing here? And, uh, I couldn't, I wasn't even saying words to him, and, uh, he called the duty driver to take me to the hospital, and they had me on an overnight drip, um, they were asking me if I had somebody that I wanted to call to be with me at this time and they were treating me like I was going to die. Um…**

**And this is, and you had the concussion at this point too. Instructors come in and say, hey, he just bounced off the jet ski pretty bad and nothing that came with that? No concussion per protocol or anything?**

**No, I got percussion, concussion protocol. Um, like they were, they didn't know that I had a concussion. I was,**

**Medicine didn’t?**

**Medical found out they, they, they did the whole, like the light tests and everything, but they didn't know I had a concussion. They thought I was just passed out from the SIPE. Um, cause I did, I passed out in the water.**

**Yeah.**

**Um, I was one of 10 people to pass the swim in the storm the day before. And I got a SIPE on the retest the day after it just killed me. It made me so mad. Like, um, yeah, and yeah, medical, like first phase was great. Medical was hell, they, uh, they have no idea what they're doing. Um, they definitely are, they're definitely sweeping people out the door to, you know, as part of the attrition, you know, it's, this is, you know, you don't, you don't bring in 300 people because, you know 300 people, or even 150 people are going to pass. You bring in 300 people because, you know, 275 or going to the fleet.**

**Yeah, Interesting.**

**Medical's helping.**

**Yeah**

**That’s most I'll say about that because they've got a mafia over there, and if you, as a student, speak out against that. You are out**

**about medical in particular ?**

**Uh yeah**

**So it kind of connects up to the next question. Um, is there a time that you had to make a difficult decision, anybody, and what was going through your mind when you made it?**

**Um, besides the last difficult decision that I made ? uh, like a difficult decision**

**the last,**

**Well, the most difficult decision I had to make, um, cause medical, they weren't like, I, I had to make the decision to like, one of the instructors came up to me. Um, and he was talking to me about the injuries and stuff, and he said, you know, you have to consider longevity at this point, this isn't worth dying for. You know, you want to be, you want to be able to run with your children if you ever have, like, he's the instructor in question, and I won't say his name. Um, he was younger than me and he had a back injury and he's never going to be able to run his children again. Um, he can barely get out of bed, uh, when he would, when he would instruct yeah, he did so, um, sitting on the tailgate of a truck, um, and he was basically, he was, this was his shore duty until he get out or however that works.**

**Yeah.**

**Um, and I told you that he talked to me, he said, you have to consider the fact that this could mess you up for life and maybe it already has. You know, it's your life, you only get one.**

**Yeah.**

**And I made the decision to remove myself from training um and I don't regret, I do regret doing that, but I don't. It's weird.**

**Yeah.**

**Anything beyond that, I don't remember any super hard decisions that I had to make. If I had to do something, if they asked me to do something late at night. You know, I didn't care because I was in the program. I wanted to be in the program, that's what I asked for. And I loved them and I loved my job care. It was great. The hardest decision was letting go.**

**Yeah. Okay. Is there anything that you would have done differently?**

**I would have gone when I was 22. Um, but that's a selfish answer really because I don't regret taking care of my dad and getting to spend time with him um till the day died. So, and which was actually a month after I left the program, he passed away. So, I had a lot of paradigm shifts.**

**Yeah.**

**But perspective.**

**I can Imagine. Uh, would you consider going back.**

**If I didn't, you know, if my back would heal, and if there wasn't an age limit, yeah, absolutely.**

**Were there any practices that you had physical, mental, spiritual practices that kind of helped you get through challenging times?**

**I read a lot of books. Um, not really, not like, I would read the Bible, but that's something that I have always kind of done. Um, I'm not, I'm not overtly religious if that's a part of your questionnaire. Um, but there are certain things that I liked to read that, um, you know, chill me out at night. Um, I kept a journal, but not like, you know, not like a dear diary journal, just**

**Yeah. Just like, you know your experiences,**

**Just like little thoughts throughout the day. Um, or maybe I would write a preemptive letter to my dad, um, or make a note, like be sure to tell dad about the, uh, you know, the shark that we saw in the swim or something like that; just dumb little things that take you out of the moment.**

**Yeah.**

**Taking yourself out of the moment is super important when you're going through first phase. If that's something that's interesting to you**

**And you do those pretty consistently, like almost each day, every other day, every night**

**Every night before bed when I was in phase. Um, I would write in my journal and. It wasn't even a journal. It was one of those write-in-the-rain, because I didn't want to risk a journal getting destroyed during a room inspection because they make your room a beach.**

**Yeah. Okay. Has this experience changed you at all, as a person?**

**I can't imagine that you would leave this experience unchanged. If you leave this experience unchanged, you didn't care.**

**Yeah.**

**So yes, I definitely was changed by this experience. Not as a person, I, um, it's a little broad, I, uh, I don't want to speak for anybody else when I say that if you remain un, if you're unchanged, I, I don't, I retract that kind of, um, I went through four classes, um, three hospitalizations and passing of my father while I was training. Um, also, uh, I was on weekends, um, well, on weekend while I was rolled between classes, uh, I’d drive up to Redlands to go take care of uh, he was, he was a, he was a violent alcoholic. So between, um, yeah, even, you know, with my injuries at the, or like, like I'd get, I remember I got out of the hospital in 44, and, uh, I went to go check on my dad because I had gotten a text from my, uh, from his, his surviving wife that he'd had another relapse. Um, I can't imagine, like, it's difficult for me to say whether or not I've been changed by just BUD/S. I had BUD/S with a whole bunch of other stuff going on. Um, I feel like life is more precious to me; um, I’m not as intense anymore.**

**Are you ?**

**I don't like to miss things. I like definitely try to spend more time with the people that I love because, uh, you know, maybe something could have happened where I might've been taken from them. Try to, um, be more, uh, affirming to my buddies who are still in because they're still my friends. Um**

**yeah.**

**Give them the support they need; um, that I felt like I didn't have. Uh, nothing to crazy**

**All right, I'm going to, uh, stop this recorder.**