**TRANSCRIBER NAME: ENS Kacor**

**Date: 1/28/2022**

**Participant #: 661**

Interviewer (Code in blue): Patty Collet-Miles

Participant (Code in black): #661

**Interview Guide**

**Okay. So my name's Patty Collet-Miles. This is the 6th of January and I have with me participant 661. So could you please tell me your participant number**

**661**

**Great. Alright, so we're going to start with these questions, like I was telling you, um, the first one is, can you just tell me a little bit about family upbringing. Where were you born? Who did you live with? How many kids? Like where you went to school, et cetera.**

**Sure, so I was born in on long island in New York. Um, I have three brothers. One of them was my twin brother who I actually went through BUD/S with. He was in my class, he’s also an officer. Um, I have a younger brother who is one year younger than me and then an older brother who is three years older than me. Um, Pretty much grew up playing sports, being outside, being at the beach, playing hockey in the winter. Um, so we were pretty active our whole lives. Um, obviously with four boys in the house, there was a lot of, you know, competitiveness and wrestling and all that kind of stuff. So, um, something physical was something I wanted to do with my career. Um, I felt like I had a competitive edge over some people. Because of that, I felt like it was going to my assets that I could offer to any community and, you know, playing sports in college, I played lacrosse, uh, for four years. Um, so I was used to being on a team. Um,**

**where'd you go to college?**

**I went to Wesleyan university, in Connecticut. Yeah, so I studied psychology there. Um, I liked learning about the mind and how people think learning about memory, all that kind of stuff. And what makes you tick? So, um, I really enjoyed that. Um, but once I graduated college, I was kind of trying to think what I wanted to do with my life. So this wasn't like something, it was, always being a SEAL was something that I’d thought about, but never seriously considered until graduating college. Um, so I'm 25 now, I graduated in 2019 and right when I graduated, I, you know, I was looking for some direction and I talked to my grandpa, and he served as a SeaBee in the Navy and he kind of was the first one to suggest, you know, consider joining the Navy. Um, and then from there, that's when it kinda all started where I was like, all right, what do I want to do in the Navy if I really want to pursue this kind of career? Um, and the more I looked into it, the more the arrows pointed towards going to BUD/S and trying to become a SEAL, um, it seemed like it was the hardest thing to do. I wanted, I wanted to do something that maybe, I was afraid of almost cause I felt like if I could conquer it, then I come out on the other side of better, man. Um, and then on top of that, the more I started to train and, you know, and network throughout that community and talk to more people and meet guys that are also, you know, trying to do the same thing, I was like, this is where I belong. It's like, I felt like everybody that I met was just like me, and you know, that was kind of like one of those reassuring factors, like I've I fit in, so I really can put my whole heart into this and know that like, um, I'm doing this because it's what I want to do. I feel like I fit in and there's a bigger purpose towards it, you know, you can find a job that's adventurous and athletic somewhere else doing something else, but I felt like being a SEAL and being in the military was there was purpose behind it so I wanted for myself, I wanted something that I felt like it was fun and I enjoyed training, but also, I didn't want to just do it just for that reason. I needed something like a higher purpose, like I was serving my country. Um, I was helping people that needed it really bad, so that's kinda what led to this.**

**Wow that’s so cool. So where, um, in what phase did you decide to leave?**

**Uh, it was in first phase.**

**Okay, whereabouts in first phase?**

**It was Monday of hell week or**

**Okay**

**Yes, it was Monday morning of hell week.**

**Okay. Um, don't tell me what happened. I'm going to ask you in a minute. I just, I’m just kinda trying to orient myself. Um, yeah, so Monday of hell week. All right, so then, um, if, if you were your friend and you were describing you, how would you describe yourself? Like, you know, some personality traits that might, you know, your psychology have a psychology, you know, what a personality trait is. So I don't need to explain to you, so what, what, how would you describe yourself?**

**Um, I guess I was kind of, I always saw myself. Okay, well, you're asking you the way someone else might see me.**

**Oh, how you see yourself, actually, but usually I say how someone else sees you because people don't always know what traits are, so, you know, so tell me about the traits that you would describe yourself as.**

**Okay. Um, I kind of pride myself on being selfless. Um, that was like my, my thing that I kind of wanted to bring into my class, was set an example for guys, um, that, you know, we're all here for something that's bigger than ourselves, and I wanted to, you know, get all the class stuff done before, you know, I would start working on my own stuff, which I felt like was something that we all needed to embrace, and I saw that in other guys in the class and, you know, I would, I would learn from them and basically be like, oh, I want to emulate something like that. So that's kind of how I wanted to go about carrying myself. Um, in terms of like leadership, cause obviously, you know, I went through as an officer. Um, my leadership style was more wasn't really as like, I wasn't the most vocal person, I wasn't the loudest, but I kind of wanted to show, you know, my leadership by example, so I was trying to be present at all times when guys were cleaning up the boats or, you know, sweeping the grinder afterwards, um, stuff that I might not have been assigned to, but I knew needed to get done**

**Um, what was your, uh, position of leadership here? I mean, I don't know how it works. Like what do they do as officers?**

**So officers are in charge of a specific collateral, um, which is basically a class duty. So collaterals are things like spraying down the boats after, you know, a long day of being in the ocean and you have your salt and sand off. Um, another one is cleaning the classrooms. So basically, everyday, we, at the end of the day, we'd go and get debriefed by our Proctor, like our lead instructor, and we'd sit in the classroom and we all be wet and sandy, and, you know, by the end of it, we'd all leave and someone had to clean it up. So that's another collateral. Um, there was one that was cleaning the offices for the instructors. Um,**

**and these were your responsibility?**

**So every officer would be in charge of that specific collateral.**

**Okay**

**We were all split up. So in the beginning of the class, we all probably had like 15 or 14 officers to start. So some of us were assigned, you know, two of us would be assigned to something, but by the end there was far less officers and, you know, candidates in general. Um, but that was basically the, the officers were in charge of, you know, organizing, um, the collaterals afterwards, and then on top of that, we were boat crew leaders. So every officer was, well, it wasn't, there wasn't enough officers to, for, for every boat crew to have an officer as their, um, boat crew leader, but a boat crew leaders basically, um, the coxswain of the boat. So whenever we were paddling out, I was steering the boat and I was calling cadence for paddling and boat crew leaders basically are supposed to help guys with whatever they need, whether that be, you know, how do I sharpen my knife? How do I derust my stuff? Cause the officers get here a little bit earlier. So we have time to spend in PTRR, which is like a, kind of like a holding period where you're like learning the ropes a little bit. So by the time the enlisted guys show up, you know, you know how to take care of your gear properly, how to shine your boots, like how to stencil all your stuff, which takes time. It's like, all right, pretty simple stuff, but it's kind of like, there’s little methods to, you know, save time here and there, because time is so important. It's like, you know, if you can save an hour a day to get to sleep earlier, it all compounds and it makes a big difference. So boat crew leaders were basically in charge of making sure that everyone knew exactly how to do all their stuff the right way so that the next day everyone looked fine, like they're knives were clean, all that kind of stuff, and as a class we looked good, because they were, you know, every, all the guys who just got here, were relying on their boat crew leaders to show them how to do you know, show them how to do that kind of stuff properly,**

**Okay, and, so that was kind of your**

**Yeah. So it was like being a collateral head, you know, being a boat crew leader, and just basically I was kind of, so.**

**Okay, so, can you give me one more personality trait that you'd use to describe yourself? I think I got two out of that, but some other very interesting information.**

**Yeah, um, uh,**

**Like what about your interaction with other people? How would you kind of, I don't know, tag that.**

**Okay. Um, I don't know if it's really a personality trait, but I was, I felt like I was usually out, when I was like meeting people, I would usually take the role, as the listener. Um, I was, like I said, I wasn't always the one to be like the loudest, so like when I was talking to someone one-on-one, I'd rather, you know, get to know them better rather than just like tell them all about myself or something. So**

**Of course**

**So the way I described my relationships with like, you know, the enlisted guys with the other officers was, I usually would take the back seat and the conversation to get to know somebody. Um, and that's what I kinda like, I enjoyed, out of getting, like, getting to know guys. Just being able to listen and like kind of make, make someone feel like important. Like I, cause everyone has like a different story and the more you get to know people, the more you realize that like everyone's here for, you know, some other reason, but it's all kind of like interconnected and everyone basically has like one core reason why they're here to serve and to be part of something bigger than themselves. So**

**No, that's fine. That's perfect. That really describes, I think describes you well. Yeah, um, so that's good. So, um, in the last five years before you came here, so I know you were in college and then, um, you did something, I guess, for a little while, cause you said you were 25. So just tell me a little bit about the five years before and specifically, um, what, um, maybe there were some, I don't know, experiences or something that might’ve helped you make this decision, they call them crucible experiences. If, if, if you know, if you're familiar with that.**

**Um, yeah, sure. So, um, so in college, um, really like being a SEAL, like never really was something that was on my mind. Um, but I think there was a point where, you know, I was, you know, trying to figure out what I wanted to do, and I look back on my life. And so now, like what, what is, what is all this meant? Like what, where has it shaped me and where will I fit in the best and where, where can I use my skills to my advantage? and so I, I grew up, um, in a pretty wealthy neighborhood for the first, probably half of my life, and then my dad lost his job, um, so I lived in a community where everyone had everything given to them and, you know, you know, in middle school, like after school, everyone had, you know, 20 bucks in their pocket to go like, hang out on town and get pizza and all that stuff, but I never really had that. So, you know, I wasn't poor, but being in a place where I had less than everyone else, it's I, I'm not saying woe was me, but it was definitely like, you know, I wanted, I felt like I had to earn a lot of what I, you know, would accomplish or things that I wanted, I had to earn it through work. So I ended up going to a private high school. Um, and I had to work as a janitor for two and a half hours for four days a week after school to, um, to earn my tuition. And I would give those paychecks to the treasurer and they'd put it towards my tuition. So, um, that was something that I felt like instilled the idea that you have to earn through hard work and, you know, nothing should be given to you, like it's a really nice school, It's a good opportunity. So yeah, myself, it shouldn't be on my parents, my own education, so I really want it to be there. So I've made a deal with my, the president of school and I was like, I'll, I'll work afterwards and I'll help pay for this. Um, so that's kinda like**

**So did your dad, when he lost his job, then did he get another job or?**

**Um, my dad struggled until, I mean, basically he never really found, you know, a real career. I mean, he never, so he was, he trading bonds. Uh, he's working on wall street doing that stuff. So that's what he loved. And that's what he felt like he was best at. And I think when he lost his job, um, he felt like nothing else could, you know, add up to what he was doing then, and nothing could pay the bills quite the way they did. Um, and nothing could make him feel like, you know, nothing was as exhilarating to him as, um, what he was doing then, so afterwards, you know, he was back and forth between tons of different jobs right now. I mean, he worked as a launch driver at a yacht club where he was driving a boat.**

**Um, you worked in like the shipyard there. Um, you worked for a, um, a construction company, where he wasn't doing construction, but he was like in the office, and he didn't really like that. Um, so he's, he's done a lot of different things since then.**

**But he managed to do enough that you guys didn't have to leave your home ?**

**Uh, we did, uh, we did have to leave our home. Our house was foreclosed and when I was a freshman in college and we moved to a, so it was four of us, six total, a one bathroom and two bedroom house in, um, in Bayville, which was like 45 minutes north of where we were living, so, um**

**Three of you were out by then you had a brother and then the other one, but the little one, I guess the youngest brother was still**

**yeah, but he was, yeah, but he was only a year behind us, so once he like, so we'd come home on breaks and stuff, but we were really like living in college, living on campus, but, um**

**Okay. So that makes sense. So what'd you do in terms of, um, like exercising and, you know, I don't know, preparing. Okay. So we talked a little bit about, you went to collage, yeah. So right after college, you, you must not have joined right away. So what, how did you, what happened from there to get you to here?**

**Okay.**

**Um, I got you off track with the family, Sorry.**

**Um, so I, um, I had to focus a lot on swimming. You know, I was a lifeguard, but I was never really like a competitive swimmer or anything like that, so a lot of my training initially was just in the pool. Um, and I had also joined a program which was um super beneficial, which was RDAC, um, where, you know, a former SEAL captain had started this program to help prepare students for BUD/S, and he had a former first phase instructor and we would drive to Greenwich every day, Greenwich, Connecticut, and it had, um, pool access there, so he would put us through these rigorous pool workouts. Um, they put us through like ruck workouts and stuff like that, and maybe like once a month, we'd go up Pugsy Farm, which was a place where they had logs and boats and all that kind of stuff, so basically all the stuff we would end up doing here, um, I was fortunate enough to be a part of that program to kind of experience some of it, to just like, get a little taste and see what it was like. Um, and they also, they would, write, there was Sergeant , who was British SAS, and he would write programs for us. Um, so he'd be like, you know, on Monday you're going to ruck five miles at this pace on this terrain, you know, on, on Tuesday, you're going**

**Right, and you’g go off and do that ?**

**Yeah. Um, the one thing that I, I was good at was running. I played lacrosse in college and you know, it's not, I didn't play, I didn't run track, but, you know, I felt like my lungs and my legs were like my strength, which actually wound up being my demise in all of this, so that's kind of something that I didn't work as hard at because I felt like I, like I was usually for, like the PST and all that stuff, like I was in the top of all of those. So I was like, all right, I'll focus on swimming and my weaknesses, and I'll, I'll run on the side, but not as much as maybe I should have. Um, but yeah, it was it, and I also in college, like, didn't really do any distance running, so I had to change my, the way, like worked out running, cause I was, you know, in lacrosse I'm sprinting up and down, um, I had to kind of supplement that with running five miles, 10 miles and putting in a lot of miles during the week. Um, but**

**Yeah, cause there's a lot of that here**

**For sure. So I think, uh**

**Okay, so then, um, you told me a little bit about how you ended up with the Navy, so you talked to your grandfather or whatever. So anything else about that, you know, that, strong the path. Okay, so you graduated college at 21, 22, I guess, and so then now you're 25. So when did you decide, you know, what made you decide, then and when did you decide? And how old were you? And so kind of give me a timeline.**

**Okay. Um, so it was, I graduated college and then I was planning a trip to Europe with five of my friends, and that was in August we left and right before we left**

**August of 17?**

**August of 2019.**

**Okay, 19. Okay.**

**2019 yeah. Um, so the summer after we graduated and I remember I had that conversation with my grandpa right before I left for Europe, and then hadn't decided that BUD/S or trying to become a SEAL was the number one choice at that point. Um, and I remember all three weeks of being in europe, you know, at night when I would go to bed, I would watch that class 234 documentary, I don't know if you've seen that?**

**Yeah.**

**So I'm seeing that. I was like, wow, this is really like, bad-ass is really cool stuff. It looks really hard, and I wonder if I can do that. Um, and I had Brian, my brother with me there. So we were both like, watch this stuff and we'd talk about it, and we'd be like, this is really cool stuff, like, this is really intense, this is really hard, I really want to try this. Um, so by the time we had gotten back, um, we were like dead set, like this is, this has gotta be it, and we knew that…so another thing is, where I went to high school, there was, for some reason there was a strong, I mean, when I went to all boys Catholic school, uh, in high school and there was a lot of guys who wound up going into the military.**

**Okay**

**Um, but there were like a few guys in particular that we looked up to as role models, role models, not just because they joined the military, but all throughout like high school. Like I saw, I don't know if I can use his name, but um**

**Good.**

**Yeah, he's a good guy, so he was, he was basically someone I saw in the gym all the time. Um, he was like the star athlete on the varsity lacrosse team when I was freshmen. Um, you know, he'd been pulled up from varsity as a sophomore, which is like unheard of in that, for, for that school. Um, and he was just a guy, like I looked up to, I was like, this guy is always doing it right. Um, all the coaches had like such high praise from all the time, he's like such a great leader and he wound up going to BUD/S and making it through. And we had a phone call with him, I say we, me and my brother, um, we had a phone call with him and he basically described it as like the best job in the world, and he loved so much, and this is a guy that we, you know, basically wanted to be just like**

**Right, right**

**We played the lacrosse, we, we felt like we were similar enough to him, but like he was the gold standard for all this.**

**So you started training and ?**

**So we started training, you know, we got back from our trip and, um, you know, we were running throughout the trip cause the more we figured like, this is what we want to do. We were like, all right, well, we got to get ourselves in shape, get ready. Um, so we, you know, did like the DEP program and, you know, we were working with the SEAL mentor who runs all the PSTs and all that stuff, and we'd go there twice a week,**

**And that DEP program was in your area somewhere?**

**So it was in my, it was probably half an hour from my house.**

**Okay, so they help you get you PST scores and ?**

**Yeah they had a pool and they’d help get our PST scores up and that kind of stuff, and you know, they sit down and once COVID hit, um, they'd have zoom meetings for mentorship and cause like we couldn't do workouts in person. So they'd have like guests come on and basically speak on, on behalf of their experience in BUD/S and their experience in the SEAL teams and what they liked about it and what they were saying to different, um or what have you. Um**

**So now we're into March of 2020, right, with COVID, all right, you're still not in the Navy**

**Right? So February, so originally our plan was to enlist. Um, and we were still deliberating on, do we want to be officers or do we want to enlist? And, um, we talked to a recruiter who didn't really know much about that process on the special warfare side cause he had figured that, you know, you can dual process as enlisted and officer at the same time, and if you want to get any select as an officer, you become an officer. That's not really the case, so we actually wound up getting a enlisted contract, we’ll that’s not the case for whatever, but he, uh, he got us an enlisted contract. We got the scores very easily, Um, and they were like, all right, great, like you autoqualed like, you're going to get your, your, your package, contract, or whatever. So, um, we got it in December, um, and that we were going to be shipping, this is December of 2019, and then they were like, you're going to ship, you’re gonna ship out February 3rd, 2020, and we were like, wow, that's a pretty quick turnaround. Um, you know, but we're still kind of thinking about going officer the route, which is basically going to take a year, so how was that going to work? So we talked to our SEAL mentor and he was like, this is, this is way out of line. Like, I don't know who told you, you were allowed to do this. He's like, it's not your fault, but um, if you want to go officer, like you have to basically put that all on pause and like that you can not have that processed or whatever, cause we're gonna have to like trite you from that and then add you somewhere else. So then we were like, all right. So, you know, we're going to be around for basically a year. Um, we put in our package for SOAS which was the officer, so yeah, so we put our package for SOAS, and, um, in February of 2020, I believe, yeah, 2020, and then, um, found out, you know, a couple months later that we got selected to go to SOAS, and then, you know, as we were training for that, and we had friends who had gone to SOAS the year before, so we’d train with them and they'd tell us, you know, this is something big. They're like, you have to be able to ruck and run with weight and all these things that they experienced. So, um throughout the spring, we were getting ready training with RDAC that program that trained with from Greenwich, um, and just working out and, you know, doing like little odd jobs here. Like we were working as waiters to like, kind of have some**

**And you were living at home, in the two bedroom…house?**

**living at home with my parents, Yeah. Yeah. So it was, it was, it was definitely tight quarters. And we were like, you know, um, I graduated college and in my mind I was like, um, you know, I'm an adult now. Like, this is tough. Like, I don't want to live in this tiny house with my parents anymore. Like be, so I was like, I cannot wait to get out of here and go do this and follow my dream and make it big. So I, uh, you know, I was, I was very excited to get out of there. Um,**

**so when did you then ship off to SOAS**

**so for our class and for basically the last two classes and then the following class our SOAS was canceled because of COVID. So our SOAS was all done virtually on, um, zoom, um, which a lot of the instructors had actually mentioned that they thought it was probably the reason that there was such high attrition from the officers cause usually they're the ones that like, they have like a much higher success rate in it, but we were basically down to the same attrition rate as any other guy. Um, so we did it all virtually it was probably like six interviews total. Um, I know like six interviews and exercises and that kind of stuff. I mean, like the site mission planning type stuff, and just to see how we would go about, our critical thinking skills and stuff like that. So that's what they're assessed on. Um, and that happens, so I was about, ya know, two days away, I had my flight booked and everything to go out to San Diego and then they canceled it and they were like, all right, we're gonna do this all virtually instead. So, um, the rest of the summer, we basically spent, ya know, have really solid answers to all these questions that they might ask us, um, while still training, um, we did the interviews and then I think in March, 2020, we found out that we had gotten selected. At that point, we still had our enlisted contracts and those were being rolled out. So our thought was all right, you know, like if we don't get selected as officers, we're still going to get a chance to go to BUD/S, we have this enlisted contracts and, um at that point we had gotten selected. So we were like, alright, so that's great. We'll, uh, you know, we followed our officer recruiter's instructions and, um, he gave us a ship date for February of 2021, and from there we kind of just, you know, train as much as we could because we knew that we're**

**So in February of 2021, whenever you finally did ship, did you then have to go to OCS or did you just come directly here?**

**No, I went to OCS**

**Okay, so, and how long has OCS for the Navy?**

**Uh, it is 13 weeks. Um, we did 15 weeks cause there was two weeks of quarantine. So 15 weeks total.**

**Is that in the great lakes, like all the other stuff?**

**No, it's in Newport, Rhode Island.**

**Okay, so that's where you do, uh, and so you that's like basic training and**

**Yeah, kinda like boot camp for officers, basically.**

**And then you did that; then when you finished, there was no selection, I mean, there was a selection to be officers, so some, some people were washed out right, who weren't able to make it as an officer, but for the most part, it wasn't like, BUD/S, uh,**

**All the people that, I mean, yeah, OCS was nothing like BUD/S, um, in terms of difficulty or even really what you're doing, it's more academic than physical, much more academic. Um,**

**So you finished up that then came here. Is that the way that works?**

**Yeah. So when, after we had finished. Um, we had about, I had about six weeks at home before I shipped out. Cause my no later than date to arrive at BUD/s was, um, June or July 21st and, OR just July 2021. And then, right. And, um, and so we spent like six weeks at home and then, you know, I got all my stuff, and I wanted to get a house down here with other guys, cause you know, we were getting paid enough where we could afford that. We had talked to other officers in the classes before us and they were like, get a house in a Imperial Beach, do all this, blah, blah, blah. So we signed up, um, so we checked in, in July, uh, to PTRR, and then started, so PTRR is basically like you do one evolution a day. Um, that's whether that's like a two mile bay swim, um, or a four-mile time run; it’s basically all the big evolutions you do here besides like running boat on your head or logs, nothing with boats and that stuff, but like all the timed evolutions, like you, you do the O-course you do four mile timed runs in boots and pants, um, we do some conditioning runs. We did two mile base swims. Um, we got our gear issued to us. So basically we're getting our feet wet, like figuring it out, like I said, so we'd have like, uh, you know, some kind of knowledge to lean on to help other guys once they arrived.**

**Okay. All right. So that gets us up, up to now you're starting. All right. So then, um, this next question has nothing to do with anything you've told me, but what, um, what would you say motivates you like each day? So you’ve kind of talked about some of this, but like, you know, when you wake up in the morning and you're here and you got to go to BUD/S, like what makes you get up and get there instead of just saying, forget this, this is stupid, I'm not doing it ?**

**Um, well, I think in the moment, like I think one of my PTRR instructors put it really well. Um, he's like you don't, he equated it to drunk driving, which sounds crazy. But, um, at the beginning of the night you decide sober, but you're not going to drive after you've had a few drinks, and then after you had a few drinks, maybe in your head, you're like, oh, I'm fine. I can, I can go drive and you make a crazy decision to go, you know, drive while you're under the influence. So the way he put it was when you're in pain, you know, you've already made this decision to come here, you know, why you want to be here. So when you're in pain, don't make a decision that, you know, you're not in your right mind to make. So, um,**

**that's a great point.**

**Day after day, you know, one of the hardest parts of the day was literally just rolling out of bed. It was, you know, you're in pain, you got all the swelling and like the hour or two of sleep you get in the night and it doesn't do anything, and then you wake up, you're like, I gotta do this all again. But in the back of your head, you're like, this is what I want to do. Like, I, I am, I signed up for this all voluntary. So, um, there was never a point in first phase mentally, like I think a lot of the thing that got a lot of people was being cold, um the water had just started to get cold and like surf torture was getting a lot of guys to quit, and that was something in my mind that was absolutely within my control, you know, if you're failing runs or if you're running under the boat and you're falling on your face and you physically can't keep up, that's something completely different. But, um, something like just get out of bed and just starting the day and just doing things that were absolutely in my control, that was never something like, I don't care if I'm in pain, it's fine. Um, it's not going to make me go away.**

**Right. Okay. So just kind of focusing,**

**Like I decided I wanted to do this. It's uncomfortable. I knew it was gonna be uncomfortable. That's par for the course, it's okay.**

**Right. I'm still doing it.**

**Right.**

**Okay. So then yeah, no, no, it's perfect. I mean, there is no right answer. I mean, I'm just so, so then, now we're at, at BUD/S, and, um, can you tell me just a little bit about kind of what happened? How come you're here talking to me, and you're not whatever, whatever, wherever your phase would be, um I don't really know. And was your brother in your class?**

**He was in my class.**

**Um, is he still there ?**

**No. He's actually getting interviewed right now. He was up there.**

**He was in that group.**

**He was, yeah.**

**Are you guys, do you look the same?**

**We're fraternal. So we look different like brothers, but we're not identical.**

**Okay. So, okay, so now you're in BUD/S and you're in first phase, you made it this far. And so now, then what happened?**

**Right, so, um, towards the end of the third week, um, on the Thursday leading into the final weekend before Hell Week I, I had gotten, you know, I failed the swim pretty bad, and I had never had a problem with the swim. This was Thursday right before Hell Week, and I think it was partially partially because of I had inhaled a lot of water and a lot of guys want I'm getting SIPE. I don't know if you’re..**

**Yeah, I’m very familiar with SIPE now**

**So, um, so I got a little bit of SIPE. I mean, I’ll say that, but I wasn't like diagnosed with anything, I was like coughing up some blood and coughing up this gross, like foam and having a really hard time breathing, and, um, I remember, you know, I got out of the swim, I'd failed the swim, and I was like, damn, this is, this is bad. Like I'm physically deteriorating and Hell Week is about to start, so I'm finished out the rest of the week. Um, just like push through**

**And when you say you failed the swim, it's my understanding that, what, that you have to do, you have to do in like 82 minutes or 85?**

**85**

**And so like, what did you do it in?**

**I was dead last and I was, I was dead last and I was, um, I think it was 87:12 or something.**

**So it wasn't like you..**

**I failed it, but to me that was like, what the hell was going on? Cause I had never felt this one before. I'd never had a problem passing any swims, um, You know, like the old mar stuff, like never bothered me. I've surfed my whole life. So like being in the ocean was like, this is something that I don't have to worry about. Um**

**But when you have SIPE, I think it's a little different.**

**Yeah. So throughout the swim, I was, I was really cold and I was like, my legs were locking up and I was having a really hard time breathing. Um, and I want to be in dead last. And I was like, what the hell was that? So I finished, got out on the beach and I, you know, I checked in with my time. And then for some reason, the class was getting beat pretty bad, after a swim, which was not really normal. It's usually like you report your time, you do 20 pushups and then you go change out and then they'll send you off to whatever the next meal is, but for some reason, the class that day was getting bate pretty bad, and I remember, you know, I was still in my wetsuit, most guys were like half changed out cause they were like getting changed out and they're like, all right, everybody down to the beach, like we got to remediate you for some reason. I forget what it was, but, um, I was in my wetsuit and I was remember just like doing like arm-haulers in the sand, and I was like spitting up this gross stuff. And that’s when in my head, I was like, gosh, this is like, could be a problem, so, this is not good. So anyway, it was, it was, you know, we were kind of winding down because they don't, they don't kill you on the last two days. I don't know if it's because they don't have, they choose not to, or just because we have so many admin things, they don't have the time to do that kind of stuff. So you're not really getting, you know, beat as bad those last two days. So luckily, you know, SIPE was perfect timing, you know, if I was going to get it, these were good days to get it. So I finished the week, you know, I basically crawled across the finish line and finished the last three weeks, and then I go into the weekend, I knew it was kind of like a 48 hour thing, if I could take care of it properly. I do, I hope, you know, like hot compress on my chest, tried to get my blood flowing, and by Sunday, um, I was like, I'm good, like my, the one thing that happened on Thursday, um, was I was running to chow, and I was coughing stuff up, and my shins starting to hurt, and I was like, you know, I've never felt that pain in my shins, and I was like, that's weird, like, it's probably because I'm not getting enough oxygen, I was like, whatever, but it was bad enough where I had to sit down and I couldn't run. I couldn't walk. And I, wound up getting a ride to the galley, um, cause I couldn't make it there on my own, like running with the class, which, you know, it sucked, but I was like, all right, well that's weird. It's gotta be something to do with SIPE, and then, um, went to the weekend. I was like, all right, my SIPE is done, and this, like my shins wasn't even a thought, and I was like, it's, you know, it was just something that something freak that had just happened because I wasn't breathing well enough, and like, I wasn't circulating or whatever it was. I don't know why I thought that. But, um, anyway, we started Hell Week Sunday night, and, um, we do like breakout on the grinder, and the first thing we do is we, you know, we run out into the water, they have us bear crawl down to the, to the water. And we do like a little bit of surf torture laying there, and I'm fine, you know, it's cold, but whatever. Um, like I said, it's that stuff doesn't, didn't really bother me. Um, and then, um, they had us pick up the boats and put them on our heads. Then we sprinted to the grinder and that's when my shin started to hurt again. And I was like, wow, this is, I guess, a bigger problem than I thought it would be. Um, and then we wound up getting to the grinder and doing all this, you know, burpees and all this stuff, and my shins are hurting, but you know, it's fine, whatever we do, like the hour and a half, two hours of PT that we do there, um, and then we put the boats back on our heads and we started sprinting to the O course. And at that point, like my shins are really swollen and, you know, I couldn't like straighten my foot out, and I was like, this is, you know, however many hours into Hell Week and I'm already, already, like destroyed. So, um, you're running over there and I, like I said, um falling on your face when you're on your boat is different than being uncomfortable. If you physically can't perform and you can't keep up, you're not only looking like an idiot in front of instructors because you, you look like you're not prepared. Um, but you're also letting your boat crew down, because, you know, there's only so many guys under that boat that can carry the weight of that. So one less guy who is falling on his face, can't keep up. It's like an added peer pressure of like, come on, man. Like, what are you doing? Like either get out of here or like, figure it out, pull it together. So anyway, um, my shines aren't getting any better, they're getting more swollen, I'm like pressing on him, just hurts really bad. Um, I can't, I can't like. And we get to the O course, and we started doing log PT and the instructors, they saw me fall under the boat. So they're all like, you know, they, they like to hound on the weakness. So, um, I'm like at the front of the log. So I'm like right in front of the instructors and they were like, get in my face and that stuff doesn't bother me either. It's not like someone yelling at me is not going to, but, just to set the scene. I didn't look very good.**

**<laughs> I can imagine**

**Um, so I was getting yelled at and I was like, you know, I'm fine. Like, whatever, like I'll, I'll eat it. I'll just, you can yell at me all you want, but, um, whenever we put the logs down and then we're standing there in line and they give us our MREs for our first meal, and as we're standing there, like, I'm trying to figure out like what I can do. So like, I, you know, like I hide behind a bunch of guys and put my feet up and thought maybe I could drain that fluid out of my shins and it would help, or something would have. Um, that made it worse. It started hurtin way, way worse. And then, um, all right. They're like, put your, put your meals down is, you know, half hour goes by or whatever, and go hit the surf. So we run into the water and we start doing surf torture. And as everyone's going up and over the berm on like the last guy by like 25 meters, I'm just like behind everyone because I couldn't run. So I had a really hard time just keeping up and everyone gets to the surf and the instructors are saying, on the bull horn like, who's this guy, like can't even keep up whatever. So we got to the water, I'm laying in the water and they called me out of the water to find out what was going on. I told them my shins were messed up and they're like, do you want to see medical? I was like, yes, I'll go, just at least to see what the hell is going on, and I went and talked to medical. I did a bunch of assessments where I leaned back in my heels to see if, you know, the shins were actually the problem and that hurt like, hell, so they're like, all right, we're going to take you into, um, the hospital and we're going to do x-rays, we're gonna figure out if you have broken legs, which I honestly did not think for first second I had broken legs. So I was like, all right, you know, what is this going to do? It's, you're, probably a waste of time. They’re probably gonna send me back out when it was, nonetheless, it was a lot of pain and I, I couldn't run, and the next evolution after surf torture, everyone kind of knows, you know, what's the order of stuff, cause you know, it happens over and over and get word from other guys. The next evolution after a surf torture was going to be a six mile run with the boats on your heads.**

**Right. And there's no way**

**There's no way I'm going to be able to do that. Um, which looking back on it, maybe I should have hung in there and just tried and maybe I would have, you know, hobbled along, long enough in the back of the boat where they just pull me for performance and maybe I get rolled or something. Um, but like I said, there's also that pressure of, if you're a guy who just refuses to quit, but sucks and can keep up with your boat, you're screwing your book crew over, because there's six of us under a boat, and you know, now there's five guys and you got one guy who's crawling behind you. It's like, you know, if, if, if I go away, they’ll reshuffle the boats and they'll get an extra guy. So, um, anyway, I got taken to the x-ray place and I'm like sitting on the table and they do the x-rays, and they’re like, knocking on the bones and the bone doesn't hurt at all, and they press on the side, and the side is where it really hurts, like where the muscle is. Um, and you know, the x-ray comes back like inconclusive and I'm like hobbling around on crutches, and they're like to go to the bathroom, and I'm like, this is really bad, like, I can't even walk. I can't go back out there, but they're like, all right, you're, you're fit for full, like, you don't have broken shins. There's no calcifications on your bones or any signs of a fracture, so you're good to go. I'll give you a couple of Tylenol and um, whoa, sorry, um go back out there. Um, and at that point I was like, oh God, oh man, like, I don't know, how am I going to do this? So I, you know, at this point I'm just in my tri shorts. Like my, uh, spandex like could go up to here and everything else, cause I stripped off and they told me to throw it outside, cause it’s like soaking wet, cause they had to keep the dock shelters clean or whatever. Like, all right, go put your stuff on. I'm like, oh shit. I've been sitting here under a warm blanket for so long and this is really gonna suck. So I started putting all my stuff back on as I'm putting my boots on and on what socks, um, I'm thinking in my head, like, no, I'm going to go back there, and you know, I have to rejoin my boat crew after being here for basically an hour and a half, two hours, or whatever it was just sitting there. So I have to rejoin in my boat crew. They're going to see me come in there. And they're basically like, um, if you're going to repair a boat with a squeaky wheel, or car with a squeaky wheel, I was like, no, why would you do that? Nobody wants that. So I was like, I started getting in my head. I'm like, damn like the guys are going to, you're not going to want to me in their boat crew. Or like, and on top of that, I'm like, the instructors are going to be like, oh, this guy was faking it. Like he wanted to…so I'm basically like getting in my head, telling myself, like, there's nothing good that's going to come from going back in there. And I basically convinced myself, you know, like I gave it as, as much as I possibly could and, you know, I physically can't keep up anymore and if they're not gonna medically roll me in so I can heal and go into another class then, like, it seems like it's kinda over right here. Uh, I'm gonna just cut my losses and that's it. So I told the doctor, I was like, ah, I know I'm fit for full, but I'm not going back out. Like, uh, this is, is it, I’m done, and, um, yeah, so that was it.**

**So you’re done. Wow, that must've been a hard decision for you.**

**It was hard decision. Um, just because you put, especially this, um, like the officer side, as you put so much time into it, um, where as enlisted, you can kind of like get a contract within a couple months and then go out and, you know; not that there's any less time put into preparing for that kinda stuff, but I felt like I was at it for so long, so to, like finally, to be at a point where you never thought you'd be, after all that preparation, you feel like you did everything right. Uh, to be at a point where, you know, like, in your head, you're like, I'm never going to quit. I'm never going to ever quit. It's not in my blood. I'm on take the cold shiver for 24 hours, be warm for an hour, and then shiver for another 23 hours, whatever, like I'm tough. I'll do it. Um, but you never think, you'd get to the point where, you know, you can't keep up at all and you're hurting guys under the boat and you're hurting, you know, your class because if you guys are all messing up and then they'll beat the whole class, beat each boat crew, and you're like, I'm really just screwing everyone over if I'm staying here, and that's like, what you think, and maybe, maybe that's not the right way to think about it. Um, maybe you should just hang in there.**

**Where does that come from? Um, I hear that a lot, that I am not keeping up with my boat crew, so I need to quit, you know, kind of, that attitude. Like where, where do you figure that originates? I get it. That, that it's harder. I mean, I understand what you're saying. Like if there's six people on a boat crew, one person's not holding their own, then that's not good, but it seems like that that mindset is more prevalent.**

**Right, so, the way it's hurting your boat is, everything you do, um, like it pays to be a winner. So if your boat crew is performing really well and you’re, you know, let's say there's 10 boat crews and you’re in the top two boat crews, when you finish the race, you know, like the three miles of running with the boat. When you finish, you're done, you sit down in your boat, drink water, chill out. The rest of the boat crews get remediated.**

**Okay, so if you’re making it happen, then you feel really bad.**

**So if you're, if you're the one that's holding your boat crew back and you're causing extra stress on your boat crew that could get them injured potentially, so an extra 15 minutes here, 15 minutes there, by the end of the day, you do an extra two hours of hard beatings, and you feel like you're the reason that, you know, all these guys are getting beat really bad and there could be some guy who has done everything, right, he's the number one guy, but if you're the reason that's, you know, like, he can get injured.**

**Yeah, because you're not holding your weight.**

**Right, and if I’m someone who's not holding my weight, and you know, maybe I shouldn't be here then, because at some point, like, maybe you think, oh, I should have done something else to train harder or whatever it was.**

**Yeah, yeah, I hear ya**

**A lot of things went through your head and you're like**

**So then would you consider trying to come back? Is that even a possibility for an officer?**

**For officers, it's not. Um, unfortunately. If I did have the opportunity, I absolutely would. Um, I think, there's some things I would change in the way I trained, um, like I would focus a lot more on injury prevention, like doing like tib raises and doing things that I can avoid. I'd also put more miles in, before I got here, running. Um, so there's there's things I would do that I think**

**So what was wrong with you legs, did you ever figure it out? Was it shin splints?**

**It was shin splints**

**Yeah, they’re painful**

**Yeah, it wasn't like broken shins or anything, but it was like compartment syndrome where I just had swelling in the side, so**

**Believe me I've had them. I, I, they are, they can be incapacitating. Absolutely.**

**Yeah, so**

**Um, so when you were cold and you, you, you've kind of alluded to this, but when you're called, you said, you know, you can just deal with that. So how did you deal with that? Like, what, what'd you, what games did you play on your mind to help you deal with that kind of getting your head space?**

**So I kind of used my meals as a way to kind of like, once I got there, I would think like, all right, like I'm in the chow hall, look, I'm comfortable, eating hot food, and I’d think in that moment, I'd be like, all right. So now's the time to package a bunch of mental strength in my head, like, I did all that stuff already. I'm here. So now whatever's coming up next, there was another meal waiting on the other side of that, and, you know, at some point I will, I will be done with this. You know, this is not going to last forever. You know, there's a clock on this. There's a, the time ticks down. So when you're sitting there and you're freezing, you know, it sucks, but in your head, you're like, I know I can teleport in my head, you know, 30 minutes from now, and I will be sitting down, like eating a warm meal, like hanging out with my buddies and like laughing about how much that sucked**

**Right. Yeah. I mean, that's true. I've heard that a lot. Um, the meal to meal, and when you first said that I was like, mule, what is he talking about? But then I, but then I got it. But yeah, no, I mean, you're not the only person who said that to me, that was very interesting. You know, you just kind of thinking about that.**

**Right. Right, and, um, that was something that like a new would, would, would, like a lot of guys use like the meal to meal or like evolution to evolution, you do one evolution at a time, um, one bite at a time, like right. But, I think, uh, for me it was really just like putting, like closing my eyes and being like, you know, like this is going to end, like, I, this, none of this is forever. Um, this will end at some point. So that was kinda my reassurance, whenever it was…**

**And so do you think being here and this whole experience, that we've been talking about, do you think it's changed who you are as a person? Has it changed Scott Irwin or are you the same guy?**

**No, I think it has to a degree, But not just being here, I think the journey here, um, like the two years, but I mean, I think definitely being here and doing it for three weeks and, you know, I didn't make it all the way through, but I felt like I, I had given it a pretty good shot and I made it far enough where I could have exp-, I could have experienced a lot of pain, um, which is good, you know, just to see like how far you get yours.**

**Right, of course**

**Um, so I also think, uh it changed a lot of the way that I, I associate, um, with time because never in my life I've ever experienced, you know, being a part of something where 10 minutes is so valuable, like five minutes is so valuable to just sit and have five minutes off was like the best thing ever. Or at the end of the day, you know, if I could have an extra 20 minutes to just get a bunch of my own stuff done, um, so that I could sleep a little longer or whatever, just chill out and not be derusting, my knife, or, you know, going outside with the hose and cleaning all my stuff off from sand. And there's so many little things that you have to do in a day is like, I wish we could add, you know, 30 hours in a day because, you know, time is so important there, and time management is in my, my opinion was probably one of the most important skills. Um, you need to have there, because if you're for a second slacking off, like it all compounds and like the next day you're going to screw up and then you're going to get beat more, you know, break your body down more and then, you know, you won't have as much time to, you know, work on whatever.**

**So yeah, no, that's very, that's really kind of very insightful. Um, okay. And then did you think that the people in your class, for the most part, liked you, you know, I don't know if they do like peer reviews or whatever, but did you feel liked and a part of the group?**

**Uh yeah, it did. Um, there was, you know, it's a giant group of dudes, so like there's, there's definitely guys that your butt heads with a little bit, the most part.**

**Yeah. You felt like you were liked and accepted?**

**Yeah, and you know…**

**Okay. And then here's my, um, another question. So a couple of these questions were given to me. So my very last question is going to be like, what, what do you think I ought to be asking that I'm not asking, so these questions I want about, did you feel like your class liked you? That's one I got from other people, and then this other one. So do you feel like you're stuck now or, do you feel okay with where you are and what you're going to do?**

**Um, I don't feel stuck.**

**Okay**

**Um, the, the, I don't know if guys who were enlisted gave you those questions, but I think in their shoes it might be a little different.**

**Okay**

**Um, but for officers, once you finish, you go to a board and you go to interview and interview for different communities, but if you want to get out of the Navy, um, you can basically go into those interviews and tell them I don't want to be in the Navy anymore, and you'll get admin separated. You know, it's, it's a way out. So like, I don't feel like, oh my God, I'm stuck. Like, not that I want to get out of the Navy. I don't, I want to stay in the Navy, but I don't feel stuck. Um, and I don't feel like I'm going into a job that sucks. Like I know**

**Do you know what you're going to do from here?**

**I don't, I know what I want to do. I know it was probably gonna be my first choice**

**What’s gonna be you**

**Um, intelligence officer, um, which it's not really similar to, I mean, no, it's not really similar to what I would have been doing. Um, but then, um, there's not really much to choose from.**

**Mmm, I got you.**

**So yeah, that's, that's probably**

**So you'll go to do some boards or whatever to do the selection process?**

**Mmhmm**

**Okay.**

**Get your letter of recommendation. You write like a paragraph and then,**

**And then, so then my last question then is what, you know, what's an important thing that I thought I'm not asking about, or is there anything that, you know, that we're missing? That we should be asking.**

**Um, Hm. I think, um, I think a lot of people, I think just for the sake of the study, I think grit, in my opinion, I think, and especially here is, um, like the victim mentality is, did you feel like a victim throughout all of this? Cause I think a lot of guys, uh, they felt like they were picked on or like, you know, something was like personal, um, which could be true for some people, like some people really did get picked on, but I think, um, maybe asking people if they felt like a victim, because sometimes, you know, if someone says they feel like a victim, um, in my opinion, I feel like they're not really taking ownership of their own life and their own outcome.**

**Yeah, that's true.**

**Um, So**

**Like a victim, like the instructors**

**I don’t, i don’t know if that’s the best way to**

**I know what you're talking. I know what you're getting out though. Rather than taking responsibility for themselves**

**Maybe you could ask them, like, do you take full responsibility for the outcome of whatever happened, but, um, I think, um, yeah, I feel like that. Uh, at least here could be, it would be useful. Yeah.**

**Yeah. I, I, I, I know what you mean. Like the word victim is not the right word, but yeah. Okay. So I'm going to stop this unless you have any other interesting insights to share with me.**