**TRANSCRIBER NAME: ENS Bondarowicz**

**Date: 1/25/2022**

**Participant #: 664**

Interviewer (Code in blue): CDR Andrew Ledford

Participant (Code in black): #664

**CDR Ledford: Are you good with me recording this? This is just cause I can’t keep notes as fast as you’re gonna talk to me and then we’re just gonna transcribe it.**

**664: Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford: Alright, its January 6th, 2022. This is Andrew Ledford. I’m with number 664. Oh, and you were with 351. Or so, originally, you were with…**

**664: 350.**

**CDR Ledford: 350.**

**664: Got rolled, for cellulitis in my foot.**

**CDR Ledford: Rolled, med rolled to 351…**

**664: 351.**

**CDR Ledford: 351. And when did you leave Phase?**

**664: Um, Monday of Hell Week.**

**CDR Ledford: So, Monday Hell Week. Uh, when did you leave 350?**

**664: Uh, Thursday of Week 1.**

**CDR Ledford: Okay. Thursday of Week 1. Alright, so, that was… when, when was Hell Week?**

**664: Uh, we kicked off Halloween night. So Sunday the 31st.**

**CDR Ledford: Okay. So basically two months ago. Basically 8 weeks ago. So, can you tell me a little bit about your childhood? Like uh, did you move around alot? Are your parents together? Siblings? Sports?**

**664: Uh, didn’t move around alot. Parents together. Younger brother, younger sister. Um. I would say silver spoonin for the most part. But, uh to avoid that, my parents had me work on my grandpa’s wheat farm every summer.**

**CDR Ledford: Where is that?**

**664: Pullman, Washington.**

**CDR Ledford: Oh okay. Um, wheat farm. So, you’d do that for the summer?**

**664: Yeah.**

**CDR Ledford: How long did you do that? Like was that like your entire life or…**

**664: Yep, all the way up until college.**

**CDR Ledford: Where’d you go to school?**

**664: Oregon State.**

**CDR Ledford: So you went directly from high school to Oregon State?**

**664: Yep.**

**CDR Ledford: Okay, Oregon State… did you do all four years.**

**664: Yep.**

**CDR Ledford: What was your major?**

**664: Uh, accounting.**

**CDR Ledford: Accounting. You play’d a sport?**

**664: Yeah, I played baseball there. I wanted to come here right outta high school but I didn’t want to pass up the opportunity.**

**CDR Ledford: Yeah, smart move. Played baseball there, so accounting major. And then… you went uh right from Oregon State to here, to boot camp basically.**

**664: Correct.**

**CDR Ledford: Okay. So… uh, if you’re gonna describe your personality with three traits, what would they be?**

**664: Uh, I would be… I would say… um… (sigh)... hardworking…? Um, obsessive, and uhhh… (sigh)... gritty.**

**CDR Ledford: Nice. So I think we’ve covered what you’ve been doing the last five years with training. Um… but in all these prior experiences, is there something that shaped your life? Like any major experiences that kinda shaped who you are?**

**664: Uh, probably losing my finger.**

**CDR Ledford: Oh yeah… how’d that…**

**664: Uh, it got… uh I was working on the farm and it got caught in a grain auger.**

**CDR Ledford: Wow… how old were you?**

**664: Uhhh…twenty…one**

**CDR Ledford: And how did that affect you?**

**664: Uh, it floored me cause I thought I’d never get to come here or play baseball again. Um and just found a way to make it work.**

**CDR Ledford: Wow, what was that, twenty two years old?**

**664: 21.**

**CDR Ledford: Oh 21 years old. How you think that impact you for training?**

**664: Uh, not at all. I mean on the outside looking in, I’d say grip strength, but I was never really lacking in that category.**

**CDR Ledford: So not physically, but mentally, did that experience affect you in training? Like, um, make you stronger or weaker? Did you…**

**664: Uh, I thought it made me stronger…**

**CDR Ledford: Yeah…**

**664: There was like uh, I was, these guys have, uh, ten fingers. I have 9 ½ and I’m still hanging with them. What’s to say I can't do it… I think it also kinda put a chip on my shoulder. Almost to the point where looking back on at now, I think it made it so that I had such a chip on my shoulder that I had to be better than everybody else, so that when I wasn’t, it was kind of like a shell shock.**

**CDR Ledford: So, it definitely pushed you to, uh, drive, to, in a way, compensate to make sure that you were not lacking, right.**

**664: Yeah, I always thought that everyone was gonna see me with 9 ½ fingers and see me as weaker than everyone else, so I'm gonna have to compensate and be that much better.**

**CDR Ledford: So, what from your background led you to join the Navy.**

**664:Umm… didn’t come from a military family. Um, had a… uh, Delta guy who was in high school. I’d met, I’d always seen the military as um, well I just. My parents had said it's for those who can’t find their way, and whatnot. So I kinda checked off on it. But then I met this Delta guy in high school who was our like hall monitor. And he told me all about the Rangers and what special operations does. And I was like oh, that's everything, everything I want. Um, and I’d always wanted to serve my country. I went out of country at like 16 to go play baseball in Italy and I was like this country is the best thing ever. I owe, I owe my country everything. So, so I’d always wanted to serve and then once I found out bout spell, special operations, I was like this could be a rout that um, I could do. And so, thats what led me to the military.**

**CDR Ledford: Alright. What motivates you on a daily basis?**

**664: Um… purpose. That was a big thing. Um, in college when, I know I’d always wanted to do it, but I was waiting till the end of college, um, but I remember waking up one summer my junior year and I was like I can’t do this baseball thing anymore. Like I have to focus on this full time. Cause, I have nothing, nothing was driving me to wake up anymore essentially. And then once I switched over to training for BUD/S, the whole time it was like, this is no issue. Waking up at 4 or 5, whatever. I have a path, this is what I need to do.**

**CDR Ledford: Can you describe your experience at BUD/S?**

**664: Loved it. Out of all my twenty four years on this earth, this was the best time of my life. Hands down.**

**CDR Ledford: And then, uh, Monday of Hell Week, you rolled or…**

**664: No, I was uh, I, uh, see everything was going fine. Um, for the short mile, longest mile, keeping up, we were the front boat crew, winning everything. And then the last four miles just like, fell out of my boat. Wasn’t able to run. Like trying to keep up, couldn’t run. Um, and just ran behind my boat for like four miles. And then transit over, fell out again. Got on the steel pier and I was like, I can’t perform anymore, I’m gonna get sent back to 1/1 day. And I was like… I… for my first class to my second class, I was, started to get slow. My times and everything got slower. I started to feel… I was just like physically crushed. I was like I don't even think if they roll me, I would be able to get back to like strong again to go to the start of the front, or to start another class again. Um, and like, hindsight 20/20, so crushed in the moment physically that I was making decisions I shouldn’t have made and just held out to get med pulled. Cause I was like, I have compartment syndrome in my leg afterward…**

**CDR Ledford: Compartment syndrome?**

**664: Yeah it's like where uh, the like, your legs fill with like swelling and fluid…**

**CDR Ledford: Oh, okay, yeah**

**664: Um, but I didn’t like… in the moment I didn't feel any pain or anything. I was just, like my legs aren't working. Everybody else is performing and I’m the weak link so, I’m not, I don't deserve to be here. But yeah, that essentially what happened on Monday of Hell Week. Which sucks cause like quitting, it never crossed my mind. All the like Weeks 1 through 3, I was like this is awesome, I love this. And the flip of the switch, I was the weak link.**

**CDR Ledford: Interesting. So, it probably leads to the next question about a time you had to make a difficult decision. I mean, during BUD/S, was that the most difficult decision?**

**664: Um, in the, like when I was in the moment, it seemed so simple. It was like, um… for me, when I cam to BUD/S, it seemed like, what I read about it was like oh, this is just a group for gritty guys. You show up and whatever they throw at you, you just embrace the suck. And uh, when I showed up, I was like this is so more performance based. They don't just want they guy that can take a punch and just like get beat to death essentially. Like they were looking for performers. Um, especially my first class. Like, uh, we had a bunch of roll backs and they were like, if you’re weak get out, if you can’t hang, get out. Just this, this performance was my biggest fear factor coming in. Just being like, am I gonna be able to perform and like meet the standard and so on. Um, so when I, when it came to make the decision whether to stay or leave it was like um, I’m doing terrible right now and they’re not performance pulling me. So when I get under the boat again like fall over, chance at their careers.**

**CDR Ledford: Is there anything you would have done differently?**

**664: Um, I might have. When I first rolled they had recommended that I take another class just to kind of recuperate or so on. Cause it was only, by the time I started 50 and rolled into 51, there wasn’t much of a gap. I might have taken another class just so I could physically and mentally recover. Um, that and maybe I would have rucked more so maybe I could have last longer under a boat essentially. Although, I, like had my legs not given out on me, I was 100%, like, I had my brown shirt before Hell Week even started. I was like this is no factor. Like, they’ve thrown what that they can throw at me, it's not gonna make a difference.**

**CDR Ledford: Would you consider going back?**

**664: Oh hands down. That uh, in a heartbeat. It was the time of my life. I’d be crushed if I never got the opportunity to come back.**

**CDR Ledford: Good. And you know, there’s an asston of SEALs who go back to the fleet and come back in so…**

**664: My mentor and uh Lieutenant (Unsure of last name) actually both had done that.**

**CDR Ledford: Yeah it's actually very common.**

**664: It was tough actually when I got my uh job sheet. You, uh, you can’t just give me whatever rate just to go eat up my time? I’ve already burned like three month here. Uh and they were all like crazy long like extension rates and so on, so still trying to figure out how to get back here as soon as I can…**

**CDR Ledford: Yeah. What practices, uh, physical, mental, or spiritual, uh, did you use, if any, to push through challenges.**

**664: Ummmm… I mean the biggest thing for me knowing is, is as soon as 1/1 Day starts, time is ticking until you get your brown shirt or you get to the next phase. Um, I guess when it comes to physical, just go into a dark place, going until you pass out. Yeah, just going until your body just completely gives out. And when it came to like the cold I guess, just thinking of warm things, knowing it would be warm again at some point.**

**CDR Ledford: So, in a way, you kind of, dislocate from…**

**664: Yeah dissociate**

**CDR Ledford: Dissociate?**

**664: Yeah, that was… my big thing.**

**CDR Ledford: Dissociate… would you do, would you be able to do that often?**

**664: Yeah it was uh, I guess I practiced it and just training before getting here but not like thinking about practcing it. Um and then when it came to, it was just kind of second nature.**

**CDR Ledford: Is that something you got from, um Master Chief Magerachi’s brief…**

**664: Uh, he had talked about like, once he had started talked about it, I was like oh, thats what I do when I like, the like grinder PT, just going thousands of push ups and sit ups or whatever. Just like completely taking your mind away from what you’re doing, just doing it without thinking. Rope off mentality.**

**CDR Ledford: Okay… how’s this uh, if it has, uh how has this experience changed you as a person?**

**664: Uhhhhh… I think its definitely changed me for the better. Like, um, I know physically like uhhh, when you’re maxed out, you can just keep going, and going, and going, um and like knowing that this program crushes a majority of the people. And knowing I was right there with the best of them. It's not like necessarily an ego thing but just knowing that like, when the shit hits the fan, knowing I can keep up and hang and handle like whatever things are thrown at me essentially…Without being contrary to popular belief because I didn’t make it through Hell Week, um for the most part I feel like I was right there.**

**CDR Ledford: Okay… What do you think made others who did make it… uh, made them successful?**

**664: Um, I mean there, there’s, I’d say a tad bit of luck going up to Hell Week and injury free or sick free. But then you hear guys who make it through with sickness and injury. Um, I think, uh, particularly the Academy Os in my class, they had trained four years at the academy together, lived together and then showed up together. And I was in a boat crew with two of them, so obviously they were gonna look out for each other regardless. Um, I think definitely having someone to lean on is, um, is huge cause you kinda look out for each other. Obviously by the time you get to Hell Week, especially with a class, like we had 36 going in, um, you’re not necessarily gonna be ebay friends with everybody. But when it came to like me struggling so hard, I didn’t have anyone who I could be like, hey this is what's happening, what should I do? Like in fact, just not like the hero mentality, but they were just like hey if you can’t keep up, like shou..., you need to go. And I was like well I’m not gonna pull me you guys pull me through Hell Week, clearly, it’s Monday. Um, so like I already knew it. But, like having them reinforce it, it was like sweet, nobody is pulling for me here, so just kick the bucket.**

**CDR Ledford: Alright, gonna stop it here…**