**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Brendan Reilly**

**Date: 06Jan2022**

**Participant #: 673**

Interviewer (Code in blue): Dr. Celeste Raver Luning

Participant (Code in black): #673

Celeste: This is Celeste Raver Luning. It is January 6th, 2022, and I'm here with Participant 673. So, first question for you is what was your last BUD/S class?

673: 351.

Celeste: Okay. And was that your only BUD/S class?

673: Yes, ma'am.

Celeste: Okay. And what phase did you leave?

673: First phase.

Celeste: First phase.

673: Yeah.

Celeste: How many weeks ago did you? Was that-

673: Um … I was … I was plucked from the second week.

Celeste: Okay.

673: So whatever that was.

Celeste: What got you plucked?

673: Um it was a double O course failure.

Celeste: Okay. Tell me a little bit about your childhood, where you grew up, siblings, parents.

673: Yeah. So I grew up um, I mean, great family. Um lived in the same house my whole life. Two sisters, just close family. Vacation together in the summers. Uh you know, athletic family, athletic background. Played sports growing up. Uh sisters played sports as well um. Played baseball growing up uh. Yeah. It's a pretty like typical childhood, nothing crazy

Celeste: And baseball in high school?

673: Yeah, baseball in high school and uh in college as well.

Celeste: Okay.

673: And then uh. Yeah.

Celeste: Where'd you say you grew up again?

673: Chantilly, Virginia.

Celeste: Okay. And always in Virginia?

673: Yep.

Celeste: If you were to describe your personality, three traits, what would you say those are?

673: I'd say genuine, hardworking and uh resilient.

Celeste: So talk to me about the last five years of your life prior to joining the Navy.

673: Uh yeah. Last five years was uh playing collegiate baseball. I actually went to-

Celeste: So where did you go-

673: So I went to a junior college out of high school. And I had I had like no looks out of out of high school. I was really small growing up um. And I knew I wanted to play college baseball and, I mean, the dream was like professional baseball. I always had military in the background and was like, "I definitely want to serve my country," but pursued baseball as long as I could. So I went to a junior college right out of high school to uh open some more doors for myself in Florida, and then went there for two years. And then from there I went to Virginia Commonwealth University and uh played two years there um. And then I got an opportunity with the Marlins and then just kind of a long story there, it ended up not panning out. And that was my sign where I was like, "All right, it's time for me to go in the military." Um because I knew it was coming, but it was just when it was going to happen in my life. So the past five years has just been kind of working up to that point.

Celeste: So talk to me a little bit about this opportunity with the Marlins. What was that like?

673: I mean, it was cool. I signed with them and it was like a dream come true. It was a complicated situation that happened. It was during the COVID year. And I mean, it was a cool experience, but it ultimately just didn't work out. And that's fine. I think things happen for a reason and I'm happy it set me on the path that I'm on now.

Celeste: Yeah. Anything that you'd say is life-shaping experiences prior to joining the Navy?

673: Um I mean, I think just honestly, just like watching my dad. He wasn't um he wasn’t like super vocal, but just the way he carried himself and what he did for a profession and uh. And it was just like cool, just like the man he was. And I think I just always looked up to that and wanted to uh make him proud. And you know.

Celeste: Yeah. So what'd he do? What's your dad's profession?

673: He’s he’s an engineer.

Celeste: Okay.

673: Yeah.

Celeste: How do you think your experiences from your childhood through the last five years impacted your training?

673: Well, like I said, like I grew up, I was always like the smallest kid on on whatever team I played on. And uh so like I always faced that adversity where it was like I had to just work a little bit harder than everybody else to keep up with the pace. And then eventually I grew, but I definitely saw adversity growing up with that, just like size wise. Um so I … so I built some resiliency in that aspect of, you know "To keep up with these bigger guys, I got to work a little bit harder, do a little bit extra." So I think that shaped my work ethic. Because once I started growing, it was easier for me to work harder than other people, um in my opinion. So I guess that kind of shaped me in that aspect.

Celeste: And so what led you to join the Navy?

673: Um I think it was just from reflecting on my childhood and seeing just how how good I had it in this country. And I was super appreciative, just like, I mean, you know, sitting down with family and telling all these childhood stories of baseball and all these memories of my friends. And that's something I just wanted to give back. And uh I definitely don't take it for granted. And I'm thankful for all the people that that let me have that. So I want to be a part of like letting other people have that.

Celeste: Yeah. And why the NSW community, why were you interested in that?

673: It was just so I can get as hands-on as possible. And um the SEAL route is definitely, in my opinion, the way to be as hands-on, and um that's the job I want to do and the job I'll continue pursuing until I literally can't anymore. But, yeah, just hands-on as possible and just finding the route to uh really give back as much as I can.

Celeste: Yeah. What motivates you on a daily basis?

673: Uh family and friends. Honestly, it's just having success for them, to them be proud and also just you know, yeah, that's what I love.

Celeste: Yeah. Describe your experience here at BUD/S.

673: I loved it. It was awesome. I mean, it's obviously extremely challenging, and to make it through, you gotta be, you got to have a certain amount of luck. I think it plays into it, for sure. But the experiences and the uh relationships you build so fast because of the adversity you face is is unmatched. You don't find it anywhere else. And uh I mean, I thought it was awesome and it's an experience that I'm going to carry with me for the rest of my life and uh will help me the next time I come back, because I'm going to make that happen, for sure.

Celeste: Okay. Great. That's one of my questions. You're ahead of me.

673: Yeah.

Celeste: So tell me about a time you had to make a difficult decision while you were at BUD/S. Walk me through that decision.

673: Oh While I was at BUD/S?

Celeste: Yeah.

673: Um … I mean, I guess there's decisions everywhere, but uh so I was banged up a little bit going into going into phase, so from basic orientation into phase. And uh my achilles was really flared up. I like I guess had an opportunity to raise your hand when they ask for the corpsman and try to get out of it, but for some reason I just like I just wanted to like get in. I guess it was like the relationships I formed or something. I just felt like I was bailing on the guys I was with if I raised my hand and asked to get rolled or something. Um so I ultimately you know went into phase a little bit banged up, and I regret it a little bit because that was part of like why I got pulled, I think. I mean, definitely um. But that was definitely a tough decision, and I probably made the wrong one, but, yeah, I learned from it going on, so it's fine.

Celeste: And so that's at the end of BO, they say like, "Hey, if you're injured, put your hand up"?

673: Yeah. Well, they do it after every evolution.

Celeste: Okay.

673: So you always have opportunities to say, "I'm injured." And you see guys like, "Oh, I'm injured," but they're not injured. So yeah.

Celeste: I mean, this may go into it, but anything you would've done differently?

673: Maybe that, but you know I've said it before, though, in this is everything happens for a reason. So it was a good learning experience.

Celeste: And then you kind of answered this, but is the goal to try to come back? What's-

673: A hundred percent, yeah.

Celeste: And so do you know where you're going next?

673: So I put it in the job sheet. Um I dont know what they're going to choose. Like I put three options down, but it's looking like Air Rescue. That was my number one that I put. I just thought that was the best place to go, like learn a skill, um maybe mature a little bit more and develop you know more leadership, stuff like that um, but other than like going like a pack or something and chipping paint. But like I want to go you know contribute, do a real job and take some stuff away from it. If it takes me like four years to come back, it does, five years, whatever, because uh it's something I really want to do. I want to make a career out of it. So if I have to go do it for four or five years, it's fine as long as I get to come back and and do it.

Celeste: Yeah. That makes sense. Any practices, physical, mental, spiritual, that you do to get through challenges?

673: I do breathing stuff, like breathing techniques. Um I'm not super religious. I mean, like stretching and stuff, but that's not like... I mean, it's like a routine, but not really. I don't know. Yeah, so breathing, I guess, would be the only thing for that.

Celeste: Yeah. Is that something you use while you're here at BUD/S?

673: Yeah, for sure. And they teach it as well. Um but, yeah, I like looked into it, obviously, years before, just like with athletics and stuff. And like it would be something I did in the batter's box walking up to the plate or after a pitch, just like different things to calm your nerves and uh like put you back in that zone.

Celeste: Yeah. How do you think this experience changed you as a person, if at all?

673: Uh it was definitely humbling. I would say I was a humble person to begin with, but um I think seeing these absolute studs... You know you see crazy athletes come through this pipeline and they fail. And a lot of it's mental. They'll quit, and you don't expect them to. And you hear about it all the time, and you know that's why you guys are doing this study.

Celeste: Yeah.

673: But, yeah, it's interesting. And just, you literally can never judge somebody by how they look. I saw the smallest guys push themselves 10 times harder than the biggest guys, and uh it's really cool.

Celeste: Any evolutions that were particularly challenging? I mean-

673: Yeah. For for me it was uh land portage because of my ankle. I was just like limping the whole time. But I mean, it would've been challenging regardless, not to put everything on that, but yeah. And it's just like the lack of sleep and you just get run down. You're not recovering, so it makes things challenging. But, yeah, land portage is probably the harder evolution for me.

Celeste: Do you think you were liked by your class?

673: Yeah, I I think so um from what I've heard. And I mean, I have a lot of like really close friends. So um it's not like I walk around and don't talk to anybody. So it seems like it.

Celeste: What was the dynamic like of 351?

673: Oh well, I think our initial leadership was pretty brutal and that definitely separated a lot of guys like. I think anytime you're trying to get people to quit before evolutions is probably negative leadership. You know like I would like reference the Spartans. They would never try to like make another Spartan quit before going into like a war. Yeah. So, that was interesting. I didn't like that, but I mean, a lot of guys didn't like that um. That probably played a role. I mean, they talk about the dynamic of class like correlates directly with the success of the class, which, I mean, a hundred percent there's research to back it up but. So I think that was a a bad dynamic to start out with, for sure, especially for younger guys. That uh like, these dudes coming in there are 19, 20, like 18, 19, 20, and they have like this you know leader yelling at them to quit like. How are they going to take that you know? Like guys that are 24, 25, 26, you're looking at it like, "Okay, I understand, he's just a bad leadership." But for guys that don't have as much experience maybe in different um aspects of that just you know might get a little demoralized and crushed. So they definitely need people to bring them up, especially in such an … such an intense environment such as BUD/S.

Celeste: And these were the Os in 351 that were doing this-

673: Uh there was one in particular.

Celeste: Yeah.

673: Yeah.

Celeste: Was that the OIC?

673: Yeah, the initial one. And I'm sure he's got some bad reviews out there.

Celeste: Yeah, yeah. Anything I didn't ask you think is worth sharing?

673: I feel like I covered it all, but no, I mean, it was a great experience. Yeah.

Celeste: Okay. Great. I'm going to turn these off.