**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Brendan Reilly**

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**Participant #: 678**

Interviewer (Code in blue): CDR Andrew Ledford

Participant (Code in black): #678

CDR: Do you mind if I record this?

678: I don't mind at all.

CDR: Okay.

678: No, I was-

CDR: Just hold on one second. January 6 ... Do you mind if I take this out? 2022. This is Andrew Ledford. I am with number 678, so yeah, we're good.

678: Yeah.

CDR: Yeah, I mean, as far as medical goes, what were you going to say?

678: Yeah. I was just going to say, I'm an Olympic level swimmer. I trained with Michael Phelps for Rio. I was at the top of my game for a very long time, and just seeing the difference in treatment between even just very basic levels of physical therapy and this kind of one-size-fits-all routine that they have here.

CDR: Yeah.

678: It was just really disappointing, because I dislocated my right shoulder, I tore my labrum and rotator calf, and they had me in there doing overhead medicine ball holds while biking, and when I tried to correct the doctor and say, "I don't think I should be doing this. I haven't even had an MRI, and I dislocated my shoulder. It hurts a lot," he then got pissed at me, and kind of wrote me off, and then talked shit about me to the command. It kind of blew my mind, because they're passing up so many good candidates, just people that just get caught in shitty situations, that I was-

CDR: Yeah, and just need ...

678: Yeah. Well, I was on a boat crew with a log that ... My boat crew leader, not necessarily judging his decision, but decided to put 3 weak guys on the end of log to get them all tired, get them to go away. Well, by the time we got to hot laps, there was only three of us holding the log, and so at that point in my training, I thought if you put the log down, you're going to be forced to DOR, because I didn't know the whole scheme of things.

CDR: Yeah.

678: Yeah. Popped out, and that was Monday of Hell Week.

CDR: That's fricking crazy.

678: Yeah, and then when I went to go get help for it, it took a month and a half to be seen for it, another month to get the MRI, another month to see ... There was just a phone call to schedule the appointment to be seen by the orthopedic surgeon.

CDR: Yeah.

678: Then there was another month for that appointment, at which they told me, "Well, we can do the surgery that ... " They cut your bicep tendon off and reattach it to your arm right here. It's like some baseball surgery.

CDR: What?

678: So I talked to my friends and they were like, "Don't do it. It's horrible. You'll regret it," and then I suggested PRP, which is just a very basic kind of alternative to stem cell, and I got the appointment, waited another five weeks for that appointment, showed up to my appointment on time. Everything was good. This doctor had the audacity to go, "Yeah, I'm sorry. Funding's been cut. You're not getting your injection today." And she goes, "It's really funny because we just got a $5 million grant to do these types of injections, but that doesn't come online for another three months. Isn't that hilarious?" And I was like, "Yeah, that's hilarious. Well, I guess I'm going back in," so I went back in and I did everything with my left shoulder and it tore this one. That was in 343's Hell Week.

CDR: Yeah, so.

678: It is what it is.

CDR: So you started with three-

678: I was at 340.

CDR: 340.

678: Then went across. Yeah.

CDR: That was when that log PT, and you tore your.

678: Yes. It was specifically an overhead logs, and yeah, it popped out. They don't let you stop, and I didn't want to, so I ... I'll never forget it. I threw my fingers through the boot loop, and it relocated, fucking kept going.

CDR: Yeah.

678: Yeah, so like ... Yeah.

CDR: What week was that, the 340?

678: That happened in BO. That was, like, week 2. Made it to Hell Week, but I just.

CDR: Oh, so that was in BO at week two.

678: Yeah.

CDR: You relocated your own shoulder.

678: Yeah.

CDR: And then you kept going to Hell Week.

678: Yeah.

CDR: Dude. Crazy.

678: Yeah.

CDR: So in Hell Week of 340-

678: Yeah. That was November 19th was my enroll day.

CDR: Yeah, and what happened?

678: It was just in hot laps.

CDR: Oh, in hot laps.

678: Yeah. Just had a ton of pain, and just let my thoughts get to me, and I thought, I'll go get some help, I'll get repaired, and I'll come back again stronger, and I went to medical.

CDR: So you were medical roll ...

678: I was, yes.

CDR: ... in Hell Week. Got it.

678: Yeah.

CDR: You don't remember your number from 340 that we gave you?

678: No, I don't.

CDR: That was way, way, way back then. We'll be able to figure it out anyway.

678: Might be like 124 or something.

CDR: Yeah. We'll find it for your name.

678: Yeah. 12473. It's one of those two numbers.

CDR: So 340 uh candidate.

678: Yeah, I did the blood work and everything with that one.

CDR: Great, and then you go from 340. You get med-rolled to what?

678: To PTR.

CDR: Yeah, and then what class?

678: That went into 343. That was my next class.

CDR: 343. Okay.

678: Yeah.

CDR: And how long were you with them?

678: I was with them until Monday of Hell Week. We were doing buddy carries, and they found a bunch of contraband on people, and they punished us with overhead boat squats, and that was when I felt this one pop out.

CDR: What contraband? It wasn't Viagra, was it?

678: No. We had a guy who had really bad SIPE, so he snuck an inhaler in, so he had an albuterol inhaler, and then just a bunch of other guys had dip and less serious stuff.

CDR: Oh, okay, so it was ...

678: But it was like, six or seven people, so they had those people stand on shore, and they had us doing fucking rocking chairs for an hour. It was crazy.

CDR: Have you heard of guys using Viagra for SIPE?

678: I have, yes. It's a regular thing.

CDR: Everyone knows about that.

678: Yeah.

CDR: And is Viagra considered contraband?

678: Yes.

CDR: Yeah.

678: I mean, these guys just want to make it ... they want to make it through Hell Week, and so apparently ... I've just heard the stories. I don't know the medical science behind it, but I've heard that a lot of times, that that's like a cure or a temporary fix for SIPE.

CDR: That's exactly what we were talking about with the researchers last night, is I would love to find the scientific support.

678: Yeah, like, where that started, because it sounds to me like it was some joke that somebody took seriously and that passed it on.

CDR: I bet you that's exactly what it is.

678: Yeah.

CDR: And it just spreads like wildfire through buds, and now it's like, yeah, dude. No, you just got to take Viagra, and ...

678: Yeah.

CDR: I mean, someone explained their rationale with the blood and vessel constriction.

678: Yeah. opens up the blood vessels in the lungs or something.

CDR: Yeah.

678: Dude blood, man.

CDR: It sounds very, very dubious.

678: You're just blocking the mechanism that releases blood from your dick, man. Like, what?

CDR: Yeah.

678: That's ridiculous.

CDR: I'd really love to see the science behind it.

678: I know. Me too.

CDR: So 343, Monday of Hell Week, and then where do you ... You go to 351?

678: No. I've been on med board since 343.

CDR: Okay, so med board.

678: Yeah.

CDR: Okay, so you're still ...

678: Yes. It's taking ... I think I started this process in November of 2020. Yeah. It's been a little while.

CDR: Are they waiting to make sure that you're completely good to put you back in?

678: They've moved past that. I've gotten my VA and DOD writing back. I've been declared unfit for service.

CDR: Oh, wow. Really?

678: Yes, but my percentage ... I had a 94 on the VA side and only 20 on the DOD side, so I appealed that, because at 30, you get TRICARE, and I just think having medical insurance would be a really good thing to move forward in life.

CDR: Yeah.

678: So I'm in that process right now. My formal board's on February 5th.

CDR: So on the VA side, you got 94%, and on the ...

678: DOD's only 20. Yeah. They only referred me for one condition on the DOD side, so when I had my whole body review on the VA side, they saw everything, but the DOD didn't recognize any of that, so we're trying to get them to recognize ... They only recognize one of my shoulders, even though they were both torn. Yeah, so kind of interesting.

CDR: Yeah.

678: Yeah. Strange processes.

CDR: How'd you describe your childhood, your background? Parents together? Did they move around a lot?

678: Yeah. Parents together. We stayed in Santa Cruz, California. My dad was a pediatric dentist and my mom was an accountant uh for my dad.

CDR: Siblings?

678: Yes. I'm the oldest of five.

CDR: Oldest of five.

678: Yeah.

CDR: And obviously swimmer all your life.

678: Yeah, swimmer all my life. Grew up swimming. I grew up doing a lot of sports. Downhill mountain biking was my favorite, but I scared my parents too much, and they wanted to keep me safe in the pool. But yeah, grew up doing triathlons. At the time I believe I was the youngest person doing Olympic-level triathlon. I was 10.

CDR: Wow.

678: I don't know. I've just always liked pushing myself. It was really funny. I saw stuff that my dad did and I wanted to do it, so ...

CDR: Um and then high school. So you went through high school, then college. To do school?

678: Yes. I went to University of Arizona for three years. Got injured there, and then they transferred me to ... or I elected to get recruited by ASU, which was the other university in Arizona, because Bob Bowman and Michael Phelps were putting together a squad for Rio, so I did three years at ASU as Bob's team captain. Graduated with a liberal studies degree.

CDR: It was liberal studies?

678: Yeah.

CDR: Did you continue swimming after ASU?

678: No. I stopped. I tried to focus on my professional career. I tried financial advising. It just was not for me.

CDR: How long did you do that?

678: I was with Morgan Stanley for probably five or six months.

CDR: Okay.

678: Did a little bit of training, and just fell a few percentage points short of passing my series seven. Honestly just didn't even find it interesting, so ...

CDR: Yeah.

678: Moved on to car sales, and that was even less interesting, and-

CDR: How long did you do that?

678: About five months.

CDR: Okay.

678: Yeah, and that was when I started ... I always kind of had the thought of doing this, ever since I watched Class 234, and yeah, just figured this is probably the best time to do it, so I quit my job and started training.

CDR: So after car sales ... Oh, so you started training.

678: Yeah.

CDR: How long did you do that?

678: I did 156 days of doubles. Just went into it. I would do an aerobic activity and then a lifting every day for quite a while. About five months. Felt pretty ready at that point.

CDR: Then you enlisted and went in.

678: I did. I enlisted on May 29th of 2019.

CDR: 2019. Got it. All right. If you had to describe your personality in three traits, how would you describe it?

678: Um Logical, resilient, um hard-working.

CDR: Okay. We've covered the last five years. Are there any experiences that really shaped you as a person from your life before the Navy?

678: Yeah. This is not connected to my name, correct?

CDR: Yeah.

678: Okay.

CDR: Correct. You're 678.

678: It's all good. Yeah, cool. I just wanted to make sure. I've got a lot riding on this. I flatlined in the hospital at U of A on my 21st birthday, and I also shallow water blacked-out while training for BUD/S. It was about two months before I enlisted. I was pulseless for about three and a half minutes, so yeah.

CDR: Where?

678: I was in Simpkins. It was a pool in Santa Cruz, California. I had a coach on deck, but I always did pretty extreme breath-holding stuff, just from my time in swimming, and yeah, those kind of brushes were pretty enlightening. Kind of saw some stuff on the other side that really directed me towards this life.

CDR: Like what? Like ...

678: I was doing a four-lap under water. That was my base.

CDR: 25 or 50?

678: I was doing 100. It was 100.

CDR: Okay.

678: That was what I had been able to do when I was swimming, so I was kind of working back up to that. 75s were feeling really comfortable again, so I went for the four lap. I only remember about halfway through that lap, and with no transition, I'm floating down this fractal tunnel, and being kind of escorted by this presence. It wasn't like a person. It was kind of just guiding me, and it took me down to the left off this beautiful path to this path of what my life would look like if I kept swimming, because I had a spot on the Porta Rican Olympic team to be the butterflyer, and the Olympics was kind of all I really accomplished in my life, and it kind of just showed me that I kind of just coasted after that, so it brought me back up to this beautiful path, and it shot me down it, and it was faster, faster, faster, like, boom, dead stop. I'm standing on top of this green grass mountain with all these rocks and stuff, and I'm all armored up. I'm in purple clothing with gold armor and this badass sword, and the skies are like galaxies, and I'm standing next to this purple figure, and I'm right about to charge into battle, and um the feeling is kind of un-describable. It was like this knowing that this is exactly what I was born to do. It was like, this is my place. Then right as I was about to charge is when I started going back in, and the people were standing over me, and yeah. Pretty wild, but I was like, oh fuck, I'm supposed to be a warrior. All right. Let's fucking send it.

CDR: Interesting.

678: Yeah.

CDR: At that point, you've already gone to the Olympics?

678: No. I was training for the Olympics.

CDR: You were training.

678: Yeah.

CDR: Okay.

678: Yeah. I was training for BUD/S, but I still had this spot on the Olympic team, so I was really weighing what I was going to do.

CDR: For Rio?

678: Yes, for Rio.

CDR: Okay.

678: Yeah. But yeah, chose eventually to not pursue the Olympic spot, and to come be a Navy SEAL, which didn't work out, obviously, but ...

CDR: Yeah.

678: Yeah. I'd say that along with just various swimming victories. Working really hard. We tried to do the math one time on my career. It was anywhere between 24 and 30 million yards. Training that long for a two-lap race or a four-lap race just ... I look back and I go, what the fuck was I thinking? But at the same time, I loved it. I loved being a part of a team. I loved being with a bunch of guys, correcting each other, pushing each other. It was just the best. Some of the best days of my life. Yeah.

CDR: Did that. How did that impact or did it have any kind of impact on your training?

678: Kind of. I knew how to get swim-worthy. I knew how to train for distance, so that was easy. Adapting that to kind of a running schedule was pretty easy, too, because it's ... I had a background in gymnastics, so I never really had issues with shin splints. My skeletal structure was pretty adapted, but in terms of just putting miles on my body, that's second nature to me.

CDR: Yeah. Good.

678: Yeah. Yeah.

CDR: Okay. I think you did this a little bit already, about describing your background and what led you to join the Navy. Like, why the Navy ...

678: Really it was just for SEALs.

CDR: For SEALs.

678: Yeah.

CDR: For the SEALs.

678: I considered and was thinking of doing an officer program for PJs, but if I'm just being honest, the SEALs just seemed like the most badass unit at the time, and with all respect to your career, I kind of think, if I went back, I'd probably go green beret, but at the time it was like, no. I mean, if I don't go for the hardest one, then I'm just a pussy, and I'm really just making excuses for myself.

CDR: Yeah.

678: But yeah. I don’t know. That was really my mindset going in. It didn't really matter that it was a department of the Navy.

CDR: Yeah.

678: I just wanted to be a SEAL, so ...

CDR: Yeah.

678: I wanted to learn how to do crazy shit, because that's kind of what my life was about, was just jumping in and learning stuff.

CDR: Yeah.

678: Yeah.

CDR: Good. What motivates you on a daily basis?

678: Um … I’m working on this part, but definitely trying to make my parents proud. I made some kind of questionable mistake. Nothing major, but just some questionable decisions as a kid um. You know, kind of fucking random girls and doing shit I shouldn't have done, and I just ... yeah, I really want my parents to know that they did well.

CDR: Yeah.

678: That's important to me, because I know they gave it everything that they got um. I guess when reaching like the 0.001 of swimming, I believe I can do that in other areas of life. Recognizing that it does take time is kind of my battle right now, because I'm so proficient at something that I want to just jump in and be proficient at other things, but it takes time, so I'm working on doing that with real estate business right now.

CDR: Okay. How would you describe your experience with BUD/S?

678: Um it was just fucking wild. It was like the last … It seems to me, with the exception of a few closed-door units, there's nothing in the world that happens like this. It’s … It’s so … It seems to be like a compilation of design challenge and like runaway tradition. Like Instructors coming back, seeing BUD/S, and remembering it slightly harder than it was, because it was so fucked up at the time, and you're so delusional, and you're so sleep deprived, and trying to make BUD/S live up to that standard. Like that times years, it just ... Because it was interesting to see the difference between even just 340 and 343, like how much harder it got, and I know it kind of goes in cycles, but yeah, it was unreal. It was … It was exactly what it needs to be, because there are so many people that just were playing Call of Duty and were like, "Well, I just kind of thought it would be sick."

CDR: Yeah.

678: You're like, dude, you're not ... My first class, I was the optimist. I was like, "No, dude, we all got this. Like we can totally just band together and just don't quit." Yeah, and then you get to the second class, and you're like, "Yeah, dude, that guy should just fucking quit," like and it's not even trying to be mean.

CDR: Yeah.

678: You're just like, you're just not supposed to be a SEAL, and that's okay, and I'm not supposed to be a SEAL either, but like I can clearly see like now I can clearly see I'm not supposed to be a SEAL. Like you have to be getting shot at. Your buddy's fucked up. Like I know this is the most extreme scenario, but this is what was going through my mind when I was being surf tortured and looking at the stars. I have to be okay with being shot at, carrying my bloody like, possibly dying best friend, and not go, "Fuck this, I quit." That's why they have to make it that hard.

CDR: Yeah.

678: It's brilliant. Yeah. It's awesome.

CDR: Can you tell me about a time that you had to make a difficult decision during BUD/S, and what was going through your mind?

678: Oh yeah. We had a guy um, heat cat under a boat. We were falling behind, so we did need to catch up, but the guy was starting to wheeze and getting really red-looking, and it's hard to like quiet ... I mean, this was my second class, so I kind of knew he was going to quit, but in the moment, yeah, I still had empathy, and he was, "Guys, I got to ... " You know, he's getting really winded, and everybody was just fucking screaming at him to fucking quit, and the instructor was right there screaming at him to fucking quit, and the dude fucking face plants, and um one of the instructors came over and grabbed him by his collar and the back of his blouse and starting fucking slamming him on the ground, telling him to get the fuck up, and he was lifeless, and he just fucking slammed his face in the ground, and the instructor was like, "Oh shit. All right, well, get medical over here," and he was like, "Fucking go. Fucking go," and in that moment I wanted to be like, "What the fuck are you doing?" There was a lot of those moments in BUD/S, where shit was just ... I don't know. It was just shocking. I had another friend heat cat out by the uh … um where we eat chow, and he was-

CDR: You're saying heat cat. Heat stroke, or ...

678: Heat stroke. Yeah. That guy, Pinkerton, had 103 fever, had liver damage afterwards. Really bad shit. But the other guy, he was not looking good on the pool deck, and ended up making it through the tread. Went to chow, and then just keeled over, started seizuring and throwing up, and so we called everybody we knew immediately, 911. Instructors happened to be near, and he just kind of casually strolled over and was like, "He's fine," and fucking was calling ... like it was casual, and, I’ve uh … I mean, I've I’ve ... not paramedic, but I've been a lifeguard. Like I've had experience with medical. He was not good, and I asked him for his knife, just to cut his fucking shit off. Cut his blouse off and cut his shirt off, because he was fucking freaking out, and he didn't even give me his knife.

678: Just little things like that. The decision to just go, "Okay, no. Everything's fine. We're going to get back to training." I think those were the hardest decisions in BUD/S. Yeah. I should have been an officer, I think, unfortunately. Yeah. Everybody told me just wait and just be an officer, and I was like, no, I want to do the cool shit. I'm going right now.

CDR: Yep.

678: Yeah, but it's all right.

CDR: Is there anything that you would have done differently?

678: I think I would have shut the fuck up at certain times, for sure um … I don't know.

CDR: You think you were too vocal and that hurt you?

678: Yeah. I think I thought I could have an effect on things, and this train is big and heavy and it's moving, and it doesn't stop or veer course for anybody, so like you end up just hurting yourself and hurting other people when you speak up um. Yeah. The instructors are really good at like pitting you against each other, kind of thing, because ... Like they say, "Oh, you're really going to go fucking on point with this dude, this fucking piece of shit?" And you're like, "Yeah, fuck him." You all fucking switch tribes and shit. They're really good at doing that, but like I wish I wouldn't have been so ... There was a lot of moments I wish I could have taken back, but yeah.

CDR: I think you answered this already about would you consider coming back?

678: Right now, no. I wake up at 7:00 in the morning now and go, what was I thinking? Like the thought of waking up at 4:00, going to wet and sandy just seems like super shitty. I think if I was to ever do any sort of training like this, I'd do it privately, because that was all I really wanted, was the skills to defend my family someday, I intend to be in some kind of dangerous invention spaces in the future. But I'm kind of trying to learn that I need to have my lane, and everybody else has their own lane, so if I need defense in that measure, I'll find it.

CDR: Yeah.

678: Yeah. But yeah, long answer, but I … I don't think so, no. I think I'm good.

CDR: Did you have any practices, like physical, mental or spiritual, that you used to push through challenges?

678: Um not really. I knew how to control my breathing. I … I spent a lot of time in my head in the pool, so just not panicking in the moment is huge. Like even if you're fucking struggling, and you have a bullhorn in your face, and you're not keeping up with the count, like, okay. Just fucking regroup. We're doing the best we can. Let's get everybody together and then start again, and don't panic. Just keep breathing.

CDR: Yeah.

678: Yeah. Try and control heart rate.

CDR: How has this experience changed you as a person, if it has?

678: I think it unlocked a different level for sure. I think I got a perspective on what the body's truly capable of, um and although I chose not to put my body through ... Because I ended up DOR-ing on Monday of 343 after my other shoulder popped. I just told the ...

CDR: Oh yeah.

678: Yeah. That wasn't really clear. I just said med board, but I DOR'd.

CDR: Oh yeah. Yeah. DOR'd. Okay.

678: Yeah. It was a very conscious, unemotional decision. I chose not to put my body through anything more um. I even chose … told the chief when I quit I just wanted to be able to throw the ball with my kid someday, and my shoulders were all fucked up. But it still unlocks … like if you decide to do something, you could do it. The best example I have of that since I've been in Buds is my and my friend, who's also a BUD/S drop, decided to train for a hundred mile run, and we just did. Just him and I. No race, no nothing. We ran from Point Loma to Oceanside and back through the night. Took 26 and a half hours, and it was just like ... Yeah. We just decided to do it.

CDR: Yeah. Good. That's a great example. Yeah.

678: Yeah. I'm thankful. I'm thankful for my time with BUD/S, for sure. It's interesting, when ... It's what I needed. It taught me how to ... like, okay, you have nothing, but you have to do this. Get it fucking done. It's all in you.

CDR: Yeah.

678: Yeah, it's cool. It's really fucking cool. It's exactly what how life works.

CDR: Yeah.

678: Yeah. You're [Unintelligible 00:29:54].

CDR: Yeah. In your opinion, what do you think, for the others who made it successfully, what do you think made them successful?

678: I … I tell people all the time, I think they're either just ... either this is like they don't want to do anything else in the entire world, or they're just tough as shit. Um those are the only two like things that I've seen, because even the people that um you know duck boat and fucking slime in, they still stay up for five and a half days, and they still get wet and sandy, and they still get beat. They're still going through it. I know they're not the badasses. They're not going to be the Team Six guys, but those guys are still just fucking tough as shit. Um other than that, a lot of them just said, "Dude, it's only four weeks," and they're really right. I didn't have a lot of faith that my body would recover. Seeing what people look like after Hell Week, it looked scary, but a lot of them were like, "Nah, you'll be fine. It's going to hurt, but whatever."

CDR: Yeah. Awesome.

678: Yeah.

CDR: Okay. Awesome. I'm going to stop the recorder here.