**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Robert Finch**

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**Participant #: 112**

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Interviewer (Code in Blue): Dietrich

Participant (Code in black): 112

**Interview Guide**

1. **Standard Interviewer Question (SIO): When did you start your BUD/S class? Is this your first BUD/S experience?**

**Yes, so I joined the navy a while ago. But it’s my first BUD/S class 3… I was actually 338. But its my first time going through BUD/S yes.**

1. **SIO: How many siblings did you have? Were they older, younger, girls, boys?**

**I have 2 siblings.**

* 1. **SIO: Are you the oldest, the youngest, can you give me birth order?**

**I’m in the middle. So I have an older brother and a younger sister.**

* 1. **SIO: And then can you tell me about your family dynamics? Are your parents married, separated, divorced?**

**Yeah so I have a really close family. My parents have been together for 25 years. Grew up pretty much spending my entire life with my family. I think before I joined the navy the longest we’d been apart was maybe a week. I joined out of high school so.**

* 1. **SIO: And do you have a good relationship with them?**

**Yes! I talk to them almost every day, maybe a couple times a week. They live close, an hour, so I see them all the time too.**

* 1. **SIO: Anything else about your family dynamics that you think would be relevant to what we’re talking about in terms of…**

**Ummm I grew up in a pretty stable house hold. My parents make good money. Self-employed. Um. Pretty much was able to, not do whatever I wanted, but if I really wanted to go do something my parents were usually able to make things happen so I’m pretty fortunate in that way. Never really struggled for anything. Um. So I think that’s interesting because there’s also people that have had polar opposite experiences in this community so… yeah.**

1. **SIO: So what life changing events have happened in your life prior to BUD/S?**

**Oh okay! So, the biggest thing that ever happened in my life is… I originally enlisted in the Navy, and then I got picked up for an officer commissioning program through Seaman to Admiral. Um and in my last year of STA-21 I actually got arrested for running from the police and I lost my commissioning, I lost my rate, and I was sent to the fleet which sparked my ability to come here.**

* 1. **SIO: Uhhh do you want to talk more about that incident?**

**Uhh yeah. I joined the Navy. I enlisted as a Nuke. I went through Nuke school. And I got picked up Seaman to Admiral as a nuke, umm… I was in ROTC at University of Arizona. Uhh I did very well. Umm. I was slotted to be a nuclear officer. And then I got into riding motorcycles. Rode with some of my good buddies and stuff there. And uh we just kinda spent day to day riding kinda oblivious to the law. We kinda did whatever, we’d speed wherever, and one day we were out riding and we made an illegal pass. Umm we uhh, this police officer happened to see us. He turned his lights on behind us and we just decided we weren’t gonna pull over. We were just gonna leave because we thought we’d get away. Umm long story short I end up getting away, but my buddy didn’t. They took his gopro and then I got arrested two weeks later. And went to all the court hearings and all that kind of stuff. And ended up getting dropped from STA-21. Uhh, kicked out of the program, they took my commissioning, uhhh tried to send me back as a nuke and then uh I had some paperwork get messed up by PSD and I lost my security clearance. So they sent me to the fleet as a DC man. And then as soon as I got to the fleet I figured there was nothing else in the Navy I was gonna do besides come here so here I am.**

* 1. **SIO: So how did those experiences factor into your experience at BUD/S?**

**Ummm I think the biggest thing I learned was… So I spent a long time why I made the decisions I made like why I did that. Because literally I’d never been in trouble my entire life. And then like, I had so much to lose but when it came down to it I didn’t think about the things I had to lose, I didn’t think about the rest of my life, in that moment I just automatically made a decision. I was like I had to figure out why I did that. And what I figured out was that the decisions you make on a daily basis, like little tiny decisions kind of train you to make decisions in the moment. So like the teams always talk about how you fall back on training, and I found that 100% in real life though. So I realized that in that split second I was like, “Hey do I pull over or hey do I run?” Because I had already spent weeks making poor decisions against the law so I had already made that decision before it came up. Um and I found that same principle applies here. Because most people that quit, a lot of the times its not, the people don’t think about the rest of their lives they don’t think about like “Hey, how is me quitting right now going to affect me down the road?” A lot of times its an in the moment decision. As much as they’ve been thinking about it or whatever but I think that most of the time when people quit its an in the moment decision. I think that comes down to like… how have you trained yourself in the years before? How have you trained yourself your whole life? Do you make those small decisions? Do you give up on little things throughout? Have you ever spent time completely dedicated to something and training yourself to have that dedication? And I think those people that have, when they get here, when it comes down to those moments where you’re like I don’t want to do this anymore, you’ve already trained yourself that it doesn’t matter what you want. You’re going to stay dedicated to whatever you’re doing. I think that’s like, what I’ve noticed from… It’s highlighted in that experience from my life and I then I saw it when I got here. And I think that, is one of the biggest defining factors in my opinion of what allows people to move on.**

* 1. **SIO: So what have you done consciously to then train yourself with those small decisions?**

**Okay, so I think for me the biggest thing that got me through here was that I spent about 3 or 4 years doing bodybuilding and stuff. And through that practice, you have to be 100 percent dedicated, so like every single day when you’re like hey I want to eat this you have to like make that conscious effort not to. And then it becomes kind of like second nature. If you’ve ever been on a diet you kind of notice that its hard at the beginning but then you like fall into the track and its easy to make those good decisions. So I think having that ability to discipline myself is one of the biggest things for that. Uhh and then when I was training to come here I did the same thing with my training. I would be like oh its raining outside and its cold, I don’t want to go outside and train. But like no, these are those little decisions that make the difference later on. So during my training I’d be like if I didn’t want to I would push myself and be like, “Hey I need to make this little decision if I want to be successful later.” So I make that decision and then ya know, it translates here. Like to be honest I never even considered quitting. It was just kinda like… When things got really bad my mind didn’t even wander in that direction and I think that’s because I knew that… I think I was able to make those decisions before they even became a thought process.**

* 1. **SIO: How do you think your personality contributed to your progression through BUD/S?**

**Yeah um… honestly I don’t know how much of an affect its had. I’m not a… honestly, I’m not the most liked person in the class. I’m a little selfish at times. Which I’m working on because its been highlighted here. Umm honestly, we have so many different personalities I don’t know if I could say one type of personality could be any different, like could offer you anything else than another kind of personality. So, I don’t know if I really have a response to that. Like I know people in this class who are disliked by the entire class, and people tried to tell them to quit because they didn’t like them as a person and they’re still here. It may make it a little easier if you’re more liked.**

* 1. **SIO: So yeah, that’s like an external view of personality. What other people consider to be traits of you that would predict behavior. Uhh and then there’s kind of the self-assessment. Which you probably saw on some of the questions you completed on the tablet. Uhh the personality factors in several different models. Maybe you’ve done Meyers-Briggs Test like MBTI. Or there’s some that have another, a sort of 5th dimension, uhh, one that we refer to is openness, how open you are to new ideas or experiences. Conscientiousness, how organized you are. Extraversion. Introversion. Are you a shy person? Do you seek out parties and people? Do you get your energy from others or having some alone time? Agreeableness. That’s sort of how friendly you are. And then neuroticism. Which has a bad connotation when you say someone is neurotic but it’s a spectrum, being sort of catatonic like a chill kinda surf bum to being a sort of nail biter and just really nervous about things. So uhh are any of those traits, have any of them held you back maybe? I heard maybe in your weight lifting maybe a degree of conscientiousness? Sort of disciplined and organized? Pursuit of a goal? Do you feel like that might be?**

**Definitely. That’s literally in my opinion what is going to allow you to make it through or not. Whether or not you’re able to make the tough decisions now and see down the road. Umm but a lot of the other ones. For me personally. I don’t think so. Other than maybe agreeableness. I’m the sort of person that I like being the best at everything. And I didn’t like not being the most agreeable person in the class. You know like, a lot of guys didn’t like me, I was very polarizing. So a lot of guys liked me and a lot didn’t. So maybe if I was more agreeable it would have helped me a little more but overall I don’t think, I don’t think personally it helped me at all and I don’t see a consistent one of any of the traits across the board. You know like I don’t see one of those traits being something everybody has. Like we have the full spectrum on pretty much all of those things in my opinion.**

1. **SIO: Describe your background that led you to pursue becoming a part of the SEAL community. Like do you have any SEAL family, friends, mentors, coaches, or friends from school?**

**So the only thing that even guided me towards the teams was when I was in school I wrote a paper about Admiral McRaven’s commencement speech. So when I wrote a paper on that I found out about the teams and then I read his book and I found out more about the people that are in the teams. And I thought hey maybe some day if I ever had the opportunity that would be cool. But being a nuke I had no way out of the community, like I had to be a nuke. So I never even considered coming here.**

* 1. **SIO: So how did you watch the speech originally?**

**It was on YouTube. So actually I think it popped up on Facebook, ya know. And I watched it in high school and then I had to write a paper in college and I thought of that and I wrote it for that. But umm I think one of the biggest reasons I’m here is that I like to be the best at anything and I felt like being a SEAL would put me there for most things in life. So that’s why I’m here.**

* 1. **SIO: So I’m going to put competitiveness under the personality question. So tell me a little bit about your childhood. Like how you were disciplined? You talked about your family which sounds like a great cohesive group there. How would you describe your parents parenting style? Were you spanked, were you sent to timeout, was it free range parenting?**

**When I was young we were disciplined when we needed to be, but I don’t think I’ve ever been grounded in my life. Umm my parents weren’t overly demanding. My dad would be like you can’t have any C’s. So like my parents, my dad was just like you can’t have any C’s but I don’t really care other than that. Umm I think the biggest think was that they demonstrated by example. So like I’d want to be like my father so he would like show me what I would want to be like. But I was never really heavily disciplined I don’t think. They weren’t very strict.**

* 1. **SIO: Okay, did they take away your video games or what were the consequences if you brought a C home?**

**Umm I think it was more like disappointment, and I didn’t like disappointing them. I don’t think I… like I said I don’t remember ever being heavily punished. If me and my brother ever got in a fight or whatever we’d get the belt but nothing like… when I was younger. My mom would get the old wooden spoon out. Yeah never… I don’t think they were overly disciplining parents.**

* 1. **SIO: Did you move around during your childhood or teenage years?**

**I did not. I mean I’m from southern California and we’d move around to different houses just because my mom gets bored but we never moved far, we were pretty much in the southern California area the entire time.**

* 1. **SIO: Did moving houses require you to change schools or social groups at all?**

**No, I went to a private school from Kindergarten, actually pre-school all the way up until 8th grade. So I went to the same school with the same group of people. Um and then I went to a public high school, the same high school for 4 years.**

* 1. **SIO: So, tell me about your teenage years. Did you participate in a team sport or activity with a tight knit community like theater or…?**

**Umm no I played football for about a year and a half. I wasn’t really super into it uhh… I wasn’t really super into the sports or anything like that. I was very into, so we did like a lot of off-roading. We’d ride motorcycles or drive cars. I was a mechanic so I worked on stuff all through high school.**

* 1. **SIO: So, was that a club?**

**No, just friends at home. My dad is a mechanicish, does mechanical things.**

* 1. **SIO: Where did you get this competitiveness? Did you compete on motocross or…?**

**I don’t know actually. I’ve never thought about that, where it came from. Literally my entire life I’ve always strived to be, like I’m never okay being like another person in the crowd. I’ve always strived to be different than everybody else. I’m usually different in the way of trying to be above everybody. Um, I even do that here, um. I don’t know where that came from to be honest with you.**

* 1. **SIO: So what have you done in the last 5 years of your life? I think you’ve covered it before. You had ROTC…**

**So I joined the navy out of high school in 2014. Umm and then I went through nuke school 2014 into the end of 2015. And then I went Seaman to Admiral, so I did that until I left there at the beginning of 2018. Went back to nuke school for about 6 months trying to get back in. And then I got sent to San Diego to a ship at the end of 2018. As soon as I got to the ship I applied to come here. I got lucky. The ship was in the ship yards, my CO was an old nuke so he had sympathy for me, and he helped me get here.**

* 1. **SIO: You must have done something though, to breakout, and have a successful package?**

**So well I mean I graduated like top of my class from nuke school, and then I was a very good… and had nearly a 4.0 in college so those… both of those helped me, especially with my CO. But as soon as I got to my ship like I knew I wanted to come here, I knew I couldn’t just you know, go to the ship and blow that off and try to come here. I knew that would irk a lot of people. So basically, when I got to the ship, again I was just trying to be the best person around. I learned everything as fast as I could, got qualified as fast as I could. Within 3 months I had made a mark and everyone kinda knew who I was already, and I said that I wanted to come do this. So, they kinda knew what I wanted to do and the package submission time came and I threw it all together and luckily like I had some people in the chain of command that were willing to help me out that sympathized with where I had been and where I wanted to go. I was able to submit and then I got selected, I had pretty good physical scores and then my prior success in the navy, even though I had one pretty big downfall. The last thing, oh my year group. The year I joined the Navy they really needed SEALs from that year. So, those are the big 3 things that helped me get here.**

1. **SIO: So sounds like some work and also some luck. Would you consider yourself impulsive? For example, do you have any tattoos that you got on a whim?**

**I think I’d be the polar opposite of impulsive. I tend to think through everything. I’m the type of guy that if I want to go buy something on Amazon I look at 50 reviews before I even choose to buy it. I’m usually not influenced by commercials or you know marketing.**

* 1. **SIO: So do you think that incident, getting arrested, I mean for me that’s a red flag of like an impulsive decision too?**

**That’s where I think… That’s what I had to figure out when I looked back on it. Do I have a character problem, is there something wrong with me that I impulsively made the wrong decision? But that’s how I figured out that I think it’s because of the decisions beforehand that kind of guided me into making that decision. Umm…**

* 1. **SIO: So you’re more of an analytical thinker?**

**100 percent, yes.**

1. **SIO: Okay, great. We’re getting there. What was the most challenging component of BUD/S? So this is like a holistic question. Uh it could be like your hardest day, it could be… it sounds like maybe you had some personality complex. (Think about your hardest day or event at BUD/S)**

**Mhmm, well I didn’t actually have any personality complex until we were all stuck on an island for 5 weeks. People like saw me as a person at all times of the day. Normally like when I was at work I’d be at work, and then when I went home I’d do my own thing. The big thing for me was that I went to bed early a couple of times when I was on the island, and people didn’t like that. I’m also the type of person that I don’t operate unless I have a good amount of sleep. Which is, uhh, different than some people. The hardest thing I think for me was uhh just the water. Umm I was never really a water person I was borderline like afraid of water. Every time we had a big water evolution I’d be very nervous about it. It’s what I got rolled out of 38 for. So I think water, any time we did a water evolution it was difficult for me.**

* 1. **SIO: What motivated to push through that, when you had that fear or lack of confidence?**

**Again, I just think the dedication. The being able to see the bigger picture. There was no way I was leaving here even if it was for water.**

* 1. **SIO: Did you feel supported by the group?**

**I think, I don’t know. I think everyone kind of gets in their own head. Especially because 2nd phase is all water and everyone is kind of on their own. People aren’t… like people kind of cheer each other on and are like, “Hey, good luck. You got this.” But I never really got much out of that. I think it’s more of I put in the hours and I knew I was able to do it, ya now.**

* 1. **SIO: You felt like a “Go get it, you got it, good job” was…**

**Just people being nice to each other. I was confident in my own abilities to do things. That’s the only comfort I had in my opinion.**

* 1. **SIO: Are there any practices like physical, mental, or spiritual that you used to push through the challenges? So here we’re asking do you pray, do you have a mantra, do you do visualization exercises? Often times athletes will have a warmup routine ya know…**

**Are you talking about in the moment or just???**

* 1. **SIO: Yeah so maybe before a water thing or before a tough evolution was there something that you did or a habit you had or a prayer.**

**Probably not. I would really try not to think about it and just think about something else. Maybe visualization a little bit. I never really had anything set in stone though. Probably some times when things are really stressful it’s just like animal brain and you just shut down and just let the things happen that are supposed to happen. Like during pool comp I just trusted that I was able to do what I was supposed to do.**

* 1. **SIO: So, you’re good at kind of numbing yourself. Or would you say…**

**I think, yeah probably. I feel like I’m pretty good at not overthinking things when I’m stressed out. Just go step by step I guess. I don’t really have a great answer for that.**

* 1. **SIO: Do you have a name for that, kind of like “Being in the moment”**

**I mean we call it front sight focus. It’s like look at the closest goal and then focus on the next one. Uh and that can be expanded or contracted based on the time frame.**

* 1. **SIO: Where did you get that term?**

**Ummm, I think its just a term that’s been thrown around this community. Uh I don’t exactly know where it came from. I know Master Chief Magerati has a lot of stuff but I don’t know if any of that helped me particularly, maybe it helped other people.**

* 1. **SIO: So you learned that here?**

**Yes. Yeah I did.**

1. **SIO: When you made a difficult decision during training at BUD/S, what went through your mind as you made that decision? Uh, for example: running classmates out or turning in a cheating class mate. Uh, how did you process that?**

**I’m trying to think of an example of where I made a difficult decision. Because I never did anything… I mean specifically I don’t remember specifically doing anything like that. If I had to I would probably try to think of what’s going to be best. So, when I think of things like that… I guess peer evals, I had to make hard decisions on those. And uh, my thing comes down to “Hey would I trust this person to… would I trust this person with my life down range.” Really that’s what it comes down to. Um there may be people I don’t like, but if I can trust them to save my life then they’re fine. You know maybe there were people I liked that I gave negative reviews because I don’t know if I could trust them to save my life.**

1. **SIO: Why do you think that you have been successful in BUD/S as compared to somebody else?**

**Again, probably like discipline. I have developed that ability to make the hard decisions, (pause as yelling in background to lock it up) uh to make those hard decisions before without having to think through it all.**

* 1. **SIO: Is there anything different you noticed about those that dropped?**

**Umm probably yeah they just didn’t have that ability… The environment was stronger than their mind was able to think. Um they were overcome by their current situation rather than the long term.**

* 1. **SIO: So you think their mind was weak and their body was?**

**I don’t think it’s a physical thing or an inherent thing. I think its something that can be trained. And maybe they just didn’t have that. And there was a couple of guys that I was surprised. One of them who was a wrestler who quit. Usually wrestlers are very good at that self-discipline because wrestling requires a lot of self-discipline. But you know maybe he didn’t use his time as a wrestler. I don’t know his story. But I think statistically wrestlers tend to do pretty well. Especially ones that can run. Umm. And I think it’s because they have that developed self discipline.**

1. **SIO: BONUS QUESTION - How did this experience, again holistically, change you as a person?**

**The only thing I’ve noticed differently is that I’m less okay sitting around relaxing. I used to be okay just chilling sitting back with my family wasting time. Now I constantly am wanting to be going. And I don’t know if that’s just because I’m used to an environment where I’m constantly going but that’s the only thing I’ve noticed pretty clearly. Like I’m not good at sitting around and relaxing anymore. I am always wanting to be doing something. So that’s the only thing I’ve noticed.**

* 1. **SIO: Is there anything else I should have asked you that helped or hurt you about BUD/S? Anything else, any questions we didn’t cover? Especially when we’re covering this topic of grit, hardiness, resilience, mindfulness.**

**I think what I’ve talked about with self-discipline is the biggest thing that I’ve learned from it. The only other thing that I’ve noticed that I thought was peculiar was that a lot… so like normally walking around American society most people have a sports team or they’re really involved in sports. I would say 70% of the people in this class don’t really care about sports or don’t really care about sports anymore. They don’t really have a team and like I was always that person but people always thought I was weird for not watching sports. Like here, its completely normal to not be super involved in sports. That’s another thing I noticed that was kind of peculiar.**

* 1. **SIO: Yeah that is, thank you for bringing that up.**