**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Nico Sbrocco**

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**Participant #: 133**

**Interviewer: Dr. Deirdre Dixon**

Interviewer (Code in Blue)

Participant (Code in black)

Interviewer: OK, can I get your number?

#133: Yes. 133.

Interviewer: 133. And is it OK if I record?

#133: Yes.

Interviewer: OK. Great, awesome. I’m gonna start out with something really easy. How many siblings do you have and what’s the birth order?

#133: I’m the oldest and my brother is a year and a half younger than I am.

Interviewer: And then, tell me about your life experiences. Do you have something that you would describe as your crucible or something that was really life shaping?

#133: Uh, for me, I would have to say, probably uh, I’m Christian, so giving myself over to Christ has been a huge part of what has gotten me through.

Interviewer: OK, so how did that impact your life at BUD/S? Or your experiences?

#133: Well, being that Jesus is my rock, I relied heavily on him as far as my confidence and my strength. And, I also have a phenomenal family that is back home supporting me, a wife that has been nothing but supportive and encouraging, so that all played into \*undecipherable\*.

Interviewer: And do you think your personality had anything to do with or contribute to your progression through BUD/S?

#133: Uhm, I would say a little bit, yeah. I am definitely, uhm, somebody that, you know, I believe that, you know, when given the opportunity to rise to something that is bigger than you, and the opportunity has presented itself, then why short sell yourself on that? You know, there's, I think it's one of those things where the pain, and the discomfort, and the uh, the inconvenience of the situation, it will end, so uh, it’s just seeing yourself until the end.

Interviewer: OK, I’m gonna ask you more, don’t worry.

#133: That’s absolutely fine.

Interviewer: So, tell me about your background that led you even to wanting to become a SEAL?

#133: It’s funny, I actually did not want to be in the military when I was younger. Uh, I always liked to play with the GI Joes and play you know soldiers and stuff like that with my brother, with, you know, plastic guns and stuff like that, but I never really saw myself in the military. I actually liked art and drawing and all that stuff. I don't know, I guess I started realizing that I had an aggressive side, I tried out lacrosse when I was in middle school, then started developing a desire to be in a sport that was a team competitive kind of thing. I really enjoyed that. And uh, as time went along, I didn't do well in college. I didn't really know what I wanted to do in my life. And I didn't have purpose in life. And it was hard for me to get excited about something. You know, I didn't really see what it was. And then I just kinda started looking into the military through some family friends and stuff like that. I remember watching the guardian and I thought I wanted to be a rescue swimmer. I just wanted to help people. I just thought that was awesome, putting other people’s needs before yourself. And, uhm, that was kinda what led me into the military to begin with.

Interviewer: OK. So tell me a little about your childhood. Like if you did something bad, how did your parents discipline you. Like if you did something bad, did they spank you? Was it time-outs?

#133: No, uh, no yeah we had a switch tree. We planted it there myself. And I would go pick a switch and go hand it to my mom and yeah, that’s the way it went.

Interviewer: OK. Uhm, and then what about your teenage years? Did you stay in lacrosse?

#133: Uhm, so yeah, stayed in lacrosse, but we did move. I grew up in Kennesaw, Georgia and uh, stayed there until middle school. My dad got an awesome new job as a nuclear engineer and uh he got a new job inNorfolk, Virginia. And uh, that was actually the first time I ever really had any exposure to the military. I never had any exposure to the military when I was growing up in Georgia.

Interviewer: But isn’t there a, Kennesaw, Georgia, isn’t there a military college?

#133: But I mean, I had, that’s a little bit further. In uh, Northeastern Georgia, so I had never really seen it or anything of it.

Interviewer: OK. So with lacrosse you were saying you got a lot out of the team and you liked the teamwork?

#133: I did. I did.

Interviewer: And then what have you done in the last 5 years of your life prior to BUD/S that led you to this? So what was your sequence? So you went to high school, then you went to college?

#133: Yes. Uhm, well it was when I, uhm, started realizing that what the demands of the job where you would have to put yourself in a situation that, uh, could threaten your life and is already threatening the lives of the people around you that I realized the kinda training that was required would demand a, uncomfortable training method and I started discipling myself really well. I actually, for a couple years, when I would work out, I wouldn’t listen to music, uhm because I wanted to see if I could find the drive within myself instead of being cheerled by music so I wanted see if I could do the gut check and find out what the hardest workout I could do to myself and do it without any motivations.

Interviewer: That's very...OK. Do you consider yourself impulsive? Do you have any tattoos? Do you binge drink?

#133: No, uhm. I do have a tattoo, I wouldn't consider myself impulsive though. I’m actually the kind of person now, that, you know, if there’s something that I want I’ll, if I find it online, i'll sit on that item for a week or more, and if i'm still thinking about it then i'll buy it, if not, then it wasn't worth the buy.

Interviewer: OK. And then, what motivates you on a daily basis?

#133: Uhm, my faith, uhm, my wife, and uhm, this opportunity in general. This is a community that should have pride in itself. It’s a clearly, it’s earned a name, and I bet that's how a lot of guys find out about it, because it had gotten some of an audience, but they, men coming together, realizing that everybody has strengths and weaknesses, but working together to accomplish objectives that other people in the world will not have the opportunity to do, and they see the dangers that are represented before them and still stay active. That’s what really drives me as well.

Interviewer: OK. Think about your hardest day of BUD/S, or your most challenging thing. What was that?

#133: Uhm, one day that really sticks out in my mind. I struggled with the O-course when I first got here. I was trying to muscle my way through, I wasn't trying to use any finesse, or use the way it’s supposed to be done. Which is, you know, you just can’t muscle through the O-course. You have to find ways to navigate the technique to get yourself through and become more efficient. And, uh, I was really slow on it and I remember I thought I had passed, and thought I had finally gotten my marker, and I remember being told that I failed by 3 seconds. My instructor gave me a hard time about it, and then went right to logs. Logs was one of my least favorite evolutions that we did in the first phase and uhm, we uh, it was a real kick in the gut, but it was one of those moments where, I prayed heavily in that moment and had to realize that there was still a job to be done. I still had to support my buddies on the log. And, that was definitely a hard moment.

Interviewer: Did you feel like the group supported you in that time?

#133: I think it’s not so much about whether they...I don’t know if everybody knew whether or not I had failed or not. It was more just, we all needed each other. The log, the log sucks, and it isn’t gonna move itself. I had a role to play and, uhm, I needed to do it to the best of my abilities. If I was slightly out of it, I would have been a detriment to them, and that would have been bad.

Interviewer: OK. And then what, what practices did you use to push you through things? Like spiritual, mental, physical?

#133: Sometimes I would try to break up certain things that you know, use markers for my goal. Whatever I found, you know, if it was a distance we had to go, OK, kinda found a way to break it up a little bit. If not, if I wasn’t using the markers, just realizing whether they were making us do 12 count body builders, I knew there was gonna be a next thing. Like they’re not just gonna do that one thing for forever. So, you just kinda had to realize this is temporary.

Interviewer: And then you said, about prayer?

#133: Prayer, 100% yeah.

Interviewer: OK, did you have, can you think of a difficult decision that you had to make during BUD/S? What went through your mind as you had to make that decision?

#133: Being, uhm, I’ve been LPO of four different classes, throughout my time at BUD/S, And, uhm, you know, sometimes as an LPO, I can’t exactly remember like a particular moment, but sometimes you have to pass on news to guys that, they don’t want to hear. And I think that’s, I like, everybody wants to be loved.Right, and you don’t want to be hated for stuff you do and say, and sometimes you have to be the bad guy and approach people in uncomfortable situations when they're not doing the right thing. So, yeah those are always difficult moments to have to have those heart to hearts, uhm. Especially when you think they’re a good guy, but maybe they're just getting lax in a certain area, you have to be the bad guy sometimes. And it stinks, but it’s required. You’re not bettering them and you’re not bettering yourself by taking that path, so. It’s tough.

Interviewer: So overall, why do you think you were successful in completing BUD/S?

#133: Uhm, I would say a lot of it is not necessarily on me. I would say I've had men around me that have inspired me, and again, you know, added the fact that I have a strong relationship with Jesus, but yeah, I think it’s, like I remember moments when we’re like, under the boat with the guys where they encouraged me when I was in a bad, you know, place. Like during hellweek, I lost 20 pounds and I was in a really bad place physically, and, uhm, my buddies really looked out for me when things were getting, you know, when the body was really taking a physical toll. So, uh, I would say definitely the guys have helped me but I would also just say that preparation to get here, you know making sure I practiced discipline and what not. Sometimes the easy thing is not the right thing, and if you can just give yourself a moment where you do something that makes you uncomfortable it’s gonna feed into the other things that you do in life because you realize that you've done it before and you can get your brain to a place that you can accept this is something that I don’t want to do and I don't’ care to do at all, but it’s what is required and I think that discipline definitely has helped.

Interviewer: Did you notice anything different in the people that quit? Or those who didn’t make it? Can you describe the differences between you and them?

#133: Uhm, I would say in some of the guys that I know that did quit, there was either a lack of confidence within themselves. Like, they would ask a lot of questions about evolutions coming up, and stuff like that. Like we all ask questions, and none of us are excited about certain evolutions that would come up, but there was a fear that you could sense, that would bring itself up. Then a lot of guys that, uh quit, would be guys that would go to, or take sick days or stuff like that. Like all the sudden, days when you would have boats, medical, guys would be going to medical and stuff like that and it was almost like it was escaping for them. Not to say that there weren’t some guys that actually had stuff going on, it was just funny how on those days, all the sudden there were a lot more dudes going to medical for whatever reason, and also, uh, guys that were on the front of being the biggest and the baddest, and guys that would do a lot of talk. I remember at prep we had guys that you know, based upon the way they talked about the way they were gonna get after it, it was like “OK, I guess you got this in the bag, man.” And uh, you actually put them in the situation and it’s, uhm, entirely different.

Interviewer: You’re not the first person to say that.

#133: It’s a mask.

Interviewer: OK. And then, I have two more questions for you. How did this experience change you as a person?

#133: The resilience aspect of it has been incredible. You know your patience for, uhm, inconvenience, really boosts, uh, but I also treasure moments when there is downtime to a whole new extreme. I think that when you're not doing something where you’re utilizing yourself to your full potential, the moments where you have downtime just aren’t as satisfying. When I have a moment just to sit with my wife and talk and just watch TV, it’s like, I don’t want to say I've earned the right to sit down on the couch, it’s like, you don’t feel guilty, like “I worked hard today.” It’s good to kinda just sit and live in the moment. It’s very satisfying.

Interviewer: OK. And then lastly, SOCOM is trying to figure out what makes people get through this, you know. What should I have asked you that might have given me a little bit of insight that I didn't ask you. What do you think i should have asked?

#133: What are your priorities?

Interviewer: To the student? To the student, to the…

#133: To, to the student. What are, like, what are the priorities? I think, I think we have a tendency in life to make things idols, and while this is a job that you should work the utmost for, and it should be something that, when, especially things that just don’t hold as much weigh in life, this should be your focus. Like if you wanted to go out with your buddies and stuff like that, but you knew you needed to sit down and study for an upcoming test that you have, like you have to devote that time. But, I’ll tell you my priority list is God, my wife, then everything else. It’s just the way it is. This is definitely the priority as far as what I’m working for, but I, I hold my faith and my God up the highest, and my relationship to my wife is, uhm, a lot of the instructors have said, “When you’re no longer in the teams, who do you have?” And my wife is who I have. And we’re hoping we live a long life together, so yeah, my family is going to be there. So that is, uhm, yeah.

Interviewer: That’s a good thing to ask. “What are their priorities?”

#133: Yeah, priorities, you know, something that’s too...sometimes we have a tendency to place things as idols in our lives, it can end up becoming more of a hindrance than, than anything else. I think that’s the point I’m trying to make.

Interviewer: Awesome, thank you so much, that was really helpful.

#133: It was a pleasure.