**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Nico Sbrocco**

**Date: 03 March 2020**

**Participant #: 140**

**Interviewer: Dr. Deirdre Dixon**

Interviewer (Code in Blue)

Participant (Code in black)

Interviewer: So, I’m gonna, is it OK if I record this?

#140: Yes.

Interviewer: And, what's your number?

#140: 140.

Interviewer: 140. Thanks. So we’re gonna start with something easy. Just tell me how many siblings you have and where you are in the birth order?

#140: I’m the oldest, uhm, I had an older brother, actually, he died when I was super young from cancer. I have a younger brother and younger sister.

Interviewer: OK. And then, if you think about your life experiences, what might you describe as your crucible, or really life changing even that happened in your life before getting here?

#140: Uhm, I don’t know. I’m not sure, I’d probably have to think on that for a minute.

Interviewer: OK. Uhm, how do you think your personality contributed to your progression through BUD/S? You made it, a lot of people didn’t. What about you has made you successful?

#140: Actually I did have a, my wife and I separated, when, like right before I went back in the class. And that definitely played a huge part in me just getting after it.

Interviewer: So when you say you separated, are you divorced?

#140: I'm not divorced, we’re just separated, trying to work things out.

Interviewer: OK. So did that experience…

#140: I think that would probably be the crucible that helped a big…

Interviewer: So how did that help or impact your experience here at BUD/S?

#140: Uhm, because it went from having a family in the skull, to having nothing but the skull. So I had to make it. I had to make it through.

Interviewer: OK. So what about, your personality? What made you successful as far as your personality goes?

#140: Growing up, I always got in the ocean, no matter what. Uhm, did that restart?

Interviewer: No it’s OK.

#140: Yeah, I always got in the water everyday no matter what. No matter how cold it was. Even though this makes me very cold, I really didn’t like getting in the water when it came to BUD/S. I still get in the water all the time, surfing, and diving, and all that stuff. Uh, I was really comfortable underwater. There were people who came here who were recreational divers, I was one, but I don’t think that really made a difference. It depends individual to individual. Im just really comfortable underwater. I’ve done a lot of long distance events, like ironmans and stuff, and I just think that like continuous physical output plays a big part because you go for like hours and hours and hours, very similar to this.

Interviewer: OK. So…

#140: Obviously not on this level, but very similar.

Interviewer: So, let me go back to what made you first want to be a SEAL.

#140: Uh, my dad was a Green Beret. Uh, enlisted and then he put in a package to come to BUD/S as an officer. At the same time he submitted for the Army’s warant officer program, got selected for that first, so he just chose that. Then he always told me he regretted it. But, growing up, I wanted to be a ranger, I don’t know why, it was just what was always in my head. Then I started looking at SEALs and changed my mind in highschool, and here I am.

Interviewer: OK. Tell me about growing up? How were you disciplined as a child, like what did your parents do if you did something wrong? Did they spank you, did they do timeouts?

#140: Growing up, they spanked me and stuff like that. Toward like high school, I started to have really bad relationship with my father so we had altercations and stuff, but that’s uh, I think that played a part, I guess...

Interviewer: OK.

#140: At making me resilient.

Interviewer: OK, tell me about your teenage years? Did you move around, did you play sports?

#140: Yes, so I was all over the place. I wrestled, played football, track, soccer one year, uhm I did my last two years of high school in Italy. We played other..

Interviewer: Where in Italy?

#140: Uh, Vincenza.

Interviewer: OK, I was in Livorno.

#140: Oh yeah?

Interviewer: So, right, I loved it too, it was really team oriented.

#140: Yeah, I loved it. Small schools, so you played against other American schools. It was great.

Interviewer: Now what about the last five years of your life prior to BUD/S? Did you go straight from high school, then bootcamp?

#140: No, so I tried to come into the Navy, I knew this was going to be an issue before coming into the Navy. My eyesight was way beyond what it needed to be. I think the minimum was 20/70, and I had 20/400. So, I came into the Navy as a corpsman. It’s a very difficult pathway to get here when already being in the fleet. Super selective. It sucked. I came in, literally miracles lined up in timelines to where I could get here. Got eye surgery, and then submitted all my paperwork and get here. Pretty short story, I guess.

Interviewer: No, that’s helpful. Would you consider yourself impulsive? Like, do you have tattoos? Do you binge drink?

#140: I drink. I like drinking. Uhm, I would consider myself a beer connoisseur, because I love beer \*laughs\*. Uhm, not to like professional level, obviously, but I like trying new beers.

Interviewer: What about impulsiveness?

#140: Uh, I don’t have any tattoos, yet. Uh, I will maybe this weekend. Not impulsive considering making stupid decisions. No.

Interviewer: OK, that’s what I’m getting at.

#140: Impulsive considering like, “hey lets go to the beach for no reason.” Yeah.

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

#140: Uhm, at work? For coming to work and…

Interviewer: You made it through and a lot of people didn’t. What keeps you going?

#140: I think a big part is people, people who used to tell me I wouldn’t be able to make it through, and just coming here and proving them wrong.

Interviewer: OK.

#140: Uhm, other than that, I have my family, I can’t let them down. And the biggest, I think, I’m not gonna let myself down. I have to do it regardless.

Interviewer: OK. And what was the most challenging component that you had? Think about your hardest day at BUD/S?

#140: Uhm, so, honestly with all the situation with my wife back then, there wasn’t, like hellweek did not affect me nearly as much as it did most people. I don’t, I didn’t have a time in hellweek where I was like “I don’t want to be here.” It was just putting my body through the meat grinder. But uhm, something recently was the gas. The gas, they have a brutal CS gassing session on the island that is just, exponential levels and just like the little baby gas chamber *\*undecipherable\**. It’s just awful. Like guys run away, guys, it’s crazy.

Interviewer: So what motivated you to get through these things?

#140: Through that? Oh, I just knew I just had to do it. It’s short and it’s extremely painful, but it's short. Uhm, it's definitely the most painful thing in my mind that I've done. Hellweek sucks yeah, and it takes a long time. But, I guess pain for time, it's just insane. I mean pain as in pain to a time as in how long it takes. It’s like 60 seconds, but it’s just excruciating. I can’t even describe it.

Interviewer: OK. And then, did you feel like you were supported by the group during these tough times?

#140: Yeah, you make friends and one of the big things that helped me I guess was my instructors told me once, “Hey if you focus more on helping your buddies out, you won't’ focus on yourself, and you won’t think about quitting.” Or, something along those lines. So I tried to look after my buddies as much as I could, but uhm, and that definitely helped. It helped with team cohesion. Because you know youre all in this together, you all have this goal, and you all tell each other you’re gonna make it through, and all of my close friends made it through hellweek. And some of them didn’t make it through the test gates later on and got dropped. But if you find a really good tight knit group of guys then...it definitely helps.

Interviewer: So what practices did you utilize to help you push through the challenges? Like did you do mental things, or spiritual things, or…?

#140: Uhm, just like before I’d go out and, I never really had anything. I wouldn’t pray, I didn’t do any ritual or anything, I kinda just like sent it with the boys. That’s pretty much it. We just fire each other up, I guess. Before, during, after, just thinking about it weeks ahead, weeks after, it still gets us fired up. I don't know, just being in it with my friends.

Interviewer: OK. Did you have any difficult decisions while you were in BUD/S training? And what went through your mind when you had to make decisions?

#140: Difficult decisions? Just concerning anything?

Interviewer: Yes. Some people said they didn’t have any. But you know, if you had something that you had to do…?

#140: I don’t, I don’t think so, honestly.

Interviewer: OK. So why were you successful at completing BUD/S? What made you different from the people that didn’t make it?

#140: In the beginning?

Interviewer: The whole thing.

#140: Well, once I feel like once you get through OC8 and the gas and all the post first phase test gates, I feel like once you get past OC8 or something like that, there’s no one thing that’s gonna keep you from quitting, I guess. Or there’s nothing that’s gonna make you quit. Because hellweek is so long and just exhausting that…Could you repeat that question again? I kinda veered off on that one.

Interviewer: OK. So what did you have that others did not have?

#140: I think the whole situation with my wife in the beginning was like an absolute crazy motivator. I mean we’re still together, figuring things out, but that was like, if I didn’t make it through then I would have nothing. Especially since this is a goal that I’ve had since I was so young, and it took me so long to get here.

Interviewer: So, what about people who didn’t make it? Do you think…

#140: I don’t know. They might not have had that motivator back in their mind. Or, they just lost focus. They get too caught up in the moment. Because pain will always stop.

Interviewer: OK, we’re almost finished, two more questions. So how did this experience change you as a person?

#140: This experience definitely made me realize that things can get really, really awful, but your mental attitude towards it plays a huge part. BUD/S is absolutely physical. Whereas, a lot of people say these special operations programs are 80% mental and 20% physical. I would think, BUD/S is 100% physical and 100% mental. It’s unlike anything else. It’s, just your attitude to anything will affect your performance.

Interviewer: So, my last question: what should I have asked you that I didn’t ask you? What do you think is important for SOCOM to know about trying to select people for BUD/S? What will make them successful?

#140: Not all the guys that are absolute physical studs are good guys. You need to find a guy who’s a good performer and a good dude, I guess. Someone who’s a teammate.

Interviewer: So a good performer and a good person?

#140: Yes.

Interviewer: That’s great.

#140: Not just a...

Interviewer: Not just a physical stud.

#140: And, I think they do a good job weeding those people out. For the most part, or identifying them in some manner.

Interviewer: That’s awesome, thank you so much.