**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Jesse Hall**

**Date: 10Feb**

**Participant #220:**

**Length of the Interview: 24:34**

Interviewer (Code in Blue): CDR Ledford

Participant (Code in black): 220

**So uhh the time is 7:52, it’s 10 February, this is CDR Ledford. I’m with participant #220 and I’m going to record this just so that we can transcribe it and keep better notes than what I am taking here…[unintelligible]**

**I’ll try and speak to that, sir I don’t want you to think I’m being disrespectful**

**Yep, no no. You sure you good with me recording?**

**Yep**

**So kind of some softball questions, when did you start your BUD/S class?**

**339**

**339….**

**So I believe we were in BO in August**

**Alright, so you made it all the way through.. Uhh how many siblings do you have?**

**I have 1 older brother.**

**So.. older brother, what’s his age?**

**He’s 27. As of 8 days ago, I missed his birthday and didn’t say happy birthday.**

**How old are you?**

**I’m 25. I turned 25 on the island.**

**Oh nice, it’s funny I had my birthday on the island too. So it’s just the two of you, what about your parents, were your parents married, divorced growing up, what..**

**My mom’s from southern california, she uhh grew up out here in Los Angeles area and then moved to New York for work. She moved to New York for work after completing graduate school in Thunderbird in Arizona, moved to New York was working in banking and then in her early thirties uh she met my father uh my father is from uh all over the place he grew up in Lebanon he grew up in Iraq he grew up in Switzerland, England, um he was attending French boarding schools growing up, but I’d say swiss because that’s where he did his primary school education, middle school education, his sort of coming of coming of age was in Switzerland so I say he’s swiss..**

**And were they married [unintelligible] growing up?**

**And then they’re yeah married my whole life, still are married**

**Okay, and how was your relationship?**

**With my parents?**

**Yeah**

**I would say it’s the best relationship anyone could have. I tell them everything, tell them my deepest fears my biggest triumphs, I share everything with them umm… we have a very open relationship, my parents always spoke to me as an adult my whole life no matter what my age was, they never spoke down to me, my dad… [interruption from instructor] um my dad never picked on me**

**Alright**

**Uh I’m sorry if I’m giving you too much information,**

**No no this is perfect**

**I’m just trying to give you the info down because I know it’s uh do you mind if I pull it just a little closer?**

**So the relationship was very open with your parents, that’s perfect. What um life-changing events happened to you prior BUD/S?**

**I am a failed entrepreneur before I came in. I spent about 2 or 3 years starting a proprietary technology company with a few business partners of mine with ranging ages from 55 years old ya know from lawyer to my main business partner where we were 20 years old. Uh we lost over half a million dollars in investment funds, uh well not lost but spent and uh and then as that project was going down and I had to admit that to myself, the SEAL path serendipitously entered my life via friends, conversation with a friend who I was living with at the time in college who went to Norwhich, which was a military academy in Vermont, and he told me about the SEAL path and that day I wanted to do this and I had go through the process of telling our investors that we were closing down shop. At that same time, I was starting to train for this and it was two years before I showed up. So after college I moved home with those very open parents of mine where I trained for about a year and a half just living in New Jersey training with them, like training literally at the end of every training day my dad would ask me how fast did you run how far did you run and how much weight did you lift, how far did you swim? He was like my accountability guy and I would have conversations with them not just about what I did physically to prepare, but then mentally why I wanted to do this, why I was gonna make it and all that. I had conversations with them literally on a nightly basis for about a year and half and I think that’s what prepared me. But yeah, experiencing failure but at the same time experiencing what amazing things can happen if you do stick with the project for multiple years at a time, how far the evolution can take you, it gave me faith that oh man if you stick this thing out it was good to [unintelligible]**

**So what what things about your personality that contributed to this, about your particular personality?**

**I would say first, none of those things are things that I did, these these things are god given gifts that I was born with that I went through. Literally during christmas break I went through a old photo album that my mom made of me with critiques from my summer camp days when I was 8 years old I’d been the same person my whole life, um always one of the most competitive but always willing to help others. This is just what it said this is ya know this is literally what the critique said when I was in summer camp as uh 8, 9, 10 year old. Was one of the most competitive, wanted to win the most but at the same time was willing to help out the kids that weren’t as good, so I think there was a human empathy piece there, um and uh uh I don’t I’m a diligent planner so uh I would I would literally keep notebooks of how I was gonna win capture the flag the next summer umm and then um what other things uhh oh here’s a big one um and I know it’s in your evaluation over there on the survey monkey, but I would say the ability to be vulnerable is huge, so I remember during hell week here, and I’ve been like this my whole life, so even if you’re one of the better competitors or more athletic people, I think it was that ability to be like hey guys I’m like scared right now I’m like jacked up right now, there were some negative thoughts coming into my head and I remember during hell week out here on Monday night I literally turned to my buddies and I was like “I don’t know what’s happening, I think it’s a physiological thing, but my minds racing right now and like I don’t feel like I normally do I feel terrible right now. I’m in a dark place” and just by saying it my buddy turns to me and goes “I’m in the exact same place, I’m in such a dark place” and I just go “alright, no problem” and then admitting it getting it out there and then saying screw it I’m gonna attack this next surf hit or this next surf torture evolution, I literally got a surge of energy that took me through the next four days of hell week or whatever, so it was that moment when you look at your buddies and just admit, and be honest with yourself, and I think honesty with oneself is huge. Like I I remember when I first started training I was like I cannot do pullups for some reason my dads a marathon runner I don’t have a very large build or whatever I was like I suck at pullups so I was out there doing pull ups every day for two years or whatever, I had to just do it and I still on a PST there, can still only get like 14 15 pull-ups which is sort of its still auto-qualification number but its on the lower end where as there are other guys where especially [unitelligible] if they did that they woulda been do 25 pullups right so honesty with oneself physically like for example I use to I was in boot camp I was like “hey man how fast are your 4 mile timed runs” “I don’t know” “What do you mean you don’t know? We’re going to BUD/S there’s a test gate every week thats your 4 mile timed run time” I was out on the sand in boots in Bates boots that were a size too big I was getting myself for the worst case scenarios and still hitting the times and having… I’m not saying I’m super diligent like I don’t log but I was knowing you just ran 28 minutes you just ran 27 minutes like I can tell you what my fastest 4 mile timed run was before I got in the Navy like I still remember the exact time. So and then the the 2 mile ocean swim what’s the fastest you can swim 2 miles I know it’s in the pool it’s not the same as the ocean but how fast can you do it? “I don’t know” “What do you mean you don’t know, you have to know that, like um I don’t know I went out here I did Kokoro camp, the SEALFit, so it was a 50 hour hell week simulation so I knew that I could do it right, they say no one quits after first phase, well I go and do the program out here and I’ll do it for the first two days and 50 hours of it and was 30 people that signed up and 9 people made it and I was just like well okay thats gotta be like some sort of indication of something like I’m not lying to myself I just went and worked out for 2 hours with guys that are literally instructors here still, two of the guys that were, I can’t say their names but, so I was like that’s gotta be some sort of indication, so I think honesty with oneself at every step of the way, going out to laguna I’m like “oh wow I’ve got a lot of work to do shooting, got a lot of tactical stuff I need to work on, I can barely use a multi-tool, I don’t know how to change a tire, my dad is a consultant like he never taught me any of these hard hands on skills, so its just being honest with yourself like I suck at things I have to do this**

**So talking about your dad, did you have any other people in the SEAL community, like SEALs as friends or family, military family members or friends?**

**I was the last person that anyone every thought would be in the military.**

**So a little bit about your childhood umm with your parents, how would you describe their parenting uhh style, like did they do timeouts, withholding toys, did they spank, did they were they disciplined, pretty relaxed**

**Uhh so I had two characters, my dad was the hands off guy, and then my mom would hit me, spank me, that was the only way I would listen, and I’m still the same way now, I just get spanked by SEAL instructors. I’m always the one finding myself getting the extra remedial beating at the end of the day because I need something to be beat in or else I don’t remember, so spanking there was no other withholding toys or uh if my mom went like this oh I’m really upset with you, I’m like is that it, ya know I don’t care.**

**Uhh what about your teenage uh childhood teenage years did you guys move around a lot?**

**No, I lived in the same house in New Jersey my whole life, small home town, played lacrosse, had a bunch of friends, rode bikes to their house, thank you god I had like the best childhood of all time, we traveled the world all over**

**What about your teenage years uh did you play any team sports?**

**So uh I played football, lacrosse, uh football and lacrosse were always my favorite. I was one of those guys where I mean come on once you get into high school at a certain point you say am I about to put on 30 pounds to play linebacker or am I gonna stay at 165 and play lacrosse and play midfield, so I quit football at a certain point and just did lacrosse. Um and then I golfed my whole life a golfer, so I’ve golfed since I was a kid. And uh I’ve skied since I was a little kid**

**Um so walk me through the 5 years leading up to BUD/S, what was life like in those 5 years?**

**So the 5 years leading up to BUD/S so I joined the Navy when I was 24, so we’ll start when I was 19 I was at school in South Carolina.**

**High School?**

**No no like college, I was in college at the time at the University of South Carolina uhh I joined a fraternity, I was partying, I was drinking, going to football tailgates, just a lot I don’t want to incriminate myself I don’t think you guys care about that type of stuff should I chill out with that stuff or?**

**No it’s fine**

**Yeah so I was partying, I was partying and then I realized what how vacuous of an activity that was, I was like why do I feel like crap about myself, why do I look like a weenie body, um turn the page on that got a job as a**

**How long were you at the University of South Carolina**

**I was there uh so I originally went to Kenyon College in Ohio when I was 18 right after high school and then I was playing lacrosse there and it was a really good liberal arts school so it was where my parents wanted me to go and I was like I can’t do this this is super lame um too small of an environment, too avanguard, a lot of theatre kids I was like….**

**How long were you at Kenyon?**

**One semester at Kenyon college.**

**Then you went to University of South Carolina?**

**Yes, umm and I mostly went there because I wanted to play golf down there, I wanted to play club golf so joined the club golf team, was in a fraternity, got a job as a door to door salesmen where I think I experienced my first like failure no a lot of no’s**

**You were still in school?**

**I was still in school, still in school**

**But how long were you in the University of South Carolina?**

**The entire the four years following, I graduated from there yeah. Umm and got a job as a oh sorry**

**So you did one semester at Kenyon College then 4 years, graduated?**

**Yes, in 2017**

**2017 and then what happened?**

**And then so my uh so I guess during those 5 years I was a door to door salesmen and then I started working with this company where I uh met my business partner business parter Owen he uhh it was a wild story I could go on for hours about it but I was working I was I was working through my phone and my laptop I was working remotely umm and I was on business development, sales end of things we were raising money, we were creating pitch decks uh business plans, working with our lawyers making sure all of our documentation was squared away and um yep we were fundraising, and um so we did that for my last few years of college to include a semester where I studied in Europe, so I studied in uh Czech Republic my senior year fall and then uh for that last semester because I had to do an extra semester because none of the credits from Kenyon carried over to the state school because um Kenyon classes were [unintelligible] a thing and so so that last before that last semester that summer was when I was living down there by myself and I was like this company’s going nowhere what am I doing and I meet I meet this guy who was like he was like this is what I wanna do and I was like what even is that and he showed me and literally the next day I called my family and I was like alright I had a life change I’m doing this I know you guys don’t believe me but just give it some time.**

**So this is the summer after you graduated?**

**This is the summer before my last semester because I had that extra fall because of the fall at Kenyen so it was that summer and that’s when I started training uh I had been running for awhile before that but that was the summer that I started training and then and then after I graduated in December, moved home, really closed up shop with the with the business and then was training full time and then joined the Navy when I was 24.**

**So how many how many years were there between the University of South Carolina and when you graduated minus and what did you do for the last two years?**

**It was all this full time.**

**Oh so you were training?**

**I yeah like December I graduated December 2017 which is basically 2018 because it’s December of 2017 and then uhh so from 2018 so basically I trained at home from December to the next December, and then it was April, and that’s when I joined the Navy, so like a year and some change**

**So basically a semester at Kennedy College and 4 years and University of South Carolina, then you were basically training for BUD/S and then you came here?**

**Yes. And uh its Kenyon K-e-n-y-o-n K-e-n-y-o-n yeah Kenyon**

**Oh, perfect**

**Don’t know where this question came from here, so would you consider yourself impulsive?**

**Uh what does what does that word mean? Like to make decisions on a whim?**

**Yes, to make rash decisions.**

**Uh I would say when I was a kid probably but now uh I would say no I tend to think things through and understand time horizons of what I’m doing**

**Do you have any tattoos?**

**No**

**I already asked that**

**I’m very curious to see if it comes up but those are things that we definitely notice in our class. We are really interested to see this question impulsiveness and tattoos**

**I’m trying to think of other things that would be impulsive decisions**

**So what would you say is the most challenging event at BUD/S, like what was your hardest day or event at BUD/S?**

**I would say the hardest thing about BUD/S was the stress of the test gates. So at the beginning of BUD/S it was like man I gotta get up and do these really physical evolutions. Looking back at that, that was really straight forward, and that was like….[mic moving] so I would say at the beginning of BUD/S I was like I know I’m not gonna quit so I’m gonna get up at 4 o’clock in the morning and I’m gonna do whatever they tell me to do and this is gonna be hard and I’m gonna be ya know putting out but I’d say over the long haul the hardest part was the stress of the test gates, oh I have the SCUBA Diving test gate, I have this next week test gate, I have this shooting test gate. I can’t fail, I can’t fail, and at times at BUD/S like especially when you get to the island, the difference between passing and failing is this**

**Yeah**

**It’s like inches, centimeters, like a trigger pull and your breath control, so I mean I would say it was the stress of the test gates over the long haul that makes BUD/S the hardest thing, it’s like holding your contract in front of your phase the entire time, can’t fail the obstacle course, can’t fail that test, can’t fail that test, you get two shots at it if you don’t hit it you’re.. It’s like that was the hardest part of BUD/S**

**What motivated you to kinda push through that, were you supported by the group, was it..**

**I had no option. I was not ever gonna go to the fleet and that was never an option for me. Uh during boot camp I got a little taste of what the fleet was like and there was no option for me. I mean, my personality and who I am, if you were to coop me up on a ship for months on end, I literally think I’d be a liability so Iuhh that that scared me more than anything I never had an option here so this was it.**

**What challenges do you feel like did you do something on a daily basis, physical mental spiritual, that helped you uh getting through?**

**I would say that your whatever is stored in your subconscious is gonna show in BUD/S and I would say it’s those days when you’re training at home and you say “Do I dog this right now, or do I go hard? Do I quit the run? Or do I finish the run?” and I will tell you unequivocally that in my entire time training I never quit one time. I never said I was gonna do 100 pull ups and didn’t do 100 pull ups, I never said I was gonna run 5 miles and then said oh ya know what 4’s good enough. I did what I said what I was gonna do, every time and I would say even some of the days I went out there saying and guys do this in the program all the time we say hey man last 4 mile timed run of BUD/S, we’re just gonna take it easy, and then I find myself in dead sprint trying to get a personal record. We just don’t have that in us, we don’t quit, we don’t take the easy way out, and I would say it’s dudes preparation before they get in, are you lying to yourself? Did you actually do the 4 mile timed runs or are you lying to yourself? And what was your 4 mile timed run time? What was it? Tell me right now. And if you don’t have those hard answers and you weren’t honest with yourself, I think that’s what shows when you get here.**

**What about difficult decisions that you experienced here at BUD/S um did you have a decision that you particularly struggled with at a certain point, like for example running classmates out or turning them in for cheating…**

**I wouldn’t say that I had any of those problems. We did run people out and I did tell people to quit but they were people that I truly believe didn’t have the gifts to do the job, and again a lot of this stuff is god given, like my buddy back here ENS Rodriguez has more god given ability than probably anyone in the class, and I always ran boat with him over people who I was like they can’t be doing this.. I mean we did run people out but I didn’t find it to be too hard of a decision.**

**What why do you think, I think I already asked you this already why do you think you’re a successful BUD/S student, but more importantly do you notice anything different about those who made it and didn’t, when you describe the people that didn’t make it?**

**I never spent too much time focusing on the guys that I didn’t think were going to make it. I think some of them didn’t have the they didn’t have the gifts mentally or physically they just I didn’t think they just probably never had it their whole lives, kinda going out on a limb coming out here, um so I think some guys didn’t have the gifts, and then I think some guys um they just realized that the pipeline itself wasn’t right for them, especially for like officers that quit, I think they just realized that I don’t want to do this type of high stakes work. Honestly I didn’t spend too much time focusing on the guys who were I always looked at the guys who I knew were gonna make it and I hung out with them all the time and I think classes get very cliquey so those who didn’t make it hung out with other dudes that didn’t make it, and the dudes that made it, my buddies like my swim buddy I don’t know if that answers that question.**

**Perfect. Um, how does this experience change you as a person, ya know like are you different?**

**I would say most guys would agree that the biggest change is in your level of humility. I would say this program will humble you. If you think you’re the man comin in, you’re in trouble. Oh and it’s not just like physical abilities and stuff, but it’ll humble you in a sense that we all remember a time when guys said hey I need 3 guys to help me out right now with this very difficult task and my boy goes yeah, we’ve all done it, we’ve all seen ourselves be selfish, we’ve all seen it. You have to stare at it in the face every day so it’s humility not just in the physical stuff but it;s humility just all around, you just gotta get [unintelligible] perfect**

**Alright, awesome, alright, I think that’s all we’ve got um I really appreciate that was super super helpful**

**I really hope so, and I can’t wait to see my results back**

**Alright, thanks a lot**