**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Brad Alexander**

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**Participant #: 314**

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Interviewer (Code in Blue):

Participant (Code in black):

**Interview Guide**

**When did you start BUD/S and is this your first BUD/S experience?**

This is my first BUD/S experience, I started in August of 2019 in class 339 originally.

**How many siblings do you have and what’s the birth order? Oldest youngest?**

I have one older brother, so I am the youngest.

**Were your parents married, separated, or divorced?**

Uh.. they were married for most of my life and now they are divorced

**So once you were out of the house they were divorced?**

Yes ma’am.

**What would you consider life changing events that happened to you prior to entering BUD/S?**

Uhm.. Ooh.. I think my parents' relationship played a big part in my upbringing, uhh.. But at the same time I have had a lot of overseas experience uhh… I was fortunate enough to travel in college and get a job after University and I think a lot of that really helped me.

**So how did traveling help you or factor into your experience here at BUD/S?**

Uhh.. well, I will kinda answer that in two ways. On a more pragmatic note, it was easy to recall good memories when going through particularly unpleasant events so that kinda like put a smile on my face. Uhh and another way, I got to see individuals who had a lot of struggles in life compared to mine and it put things into perspective so when I had one bad day on the beach or something I thought it was one bad day and I can go back and sleep in a bed which a lot of people I met overseas did not have that luxury so I thought my life really wasn’t that tough at the moment and I should probably just keep going.

**So what part of your personality do you think helped contribute to your success at BUD/S? Anything specific?**

Yes I am very stubborn and uhh.. I think that helped a lot.

**Now describe your background that led to you wanting to be a SEAL? Do you have any SEAL family or friends in the military?**

So not necessarily military in my family but my parents were both law enforcement and I knew from a young age that I wanted to be in the military. I talked to my mom about this before coming here and she said that she remembers my fascination from SEALs from when I was like 5 or 6 and she took me to a book store and there was a book that had SEALs in it and from that point on I took that book everywhere I was. From that point on I decided I wanted to be a frogman, so I picked up SCUBA diving when I was 8 and that’s where I wanted to go but I never really knew any SEALs growing up, I saw the book and thought they were cool.

**Tell me a little bit about your childhood when you were disciplined? Did you get a timeout when you did something wrong? Did you get spanked or have to do a physical activity?**

I think it depended on if it was my mom or my dad to come punish me. I think my mom was more like clever psychologically and she would like take things away or give me a punishment I didn’t want. My father was more like spanking or the belt uh… yeah.

**Did you move around throughout your teenage years?**

Uhh no so I was born in Virginia, but I only lived there for 3 years so I don’t really have any memories. I was in South Carolina for my entire uprising all the way through college.

**Were you on a sports team when you were little or high school and what sports was it? Or what did you do that was a tight knit community?**

So that’s actually kind of where I am a little different, growing up I was loner and didn’t really like team sports. Uhm in middle school, or highschool I started playing football but it wasn’t really something I was that into. Uhm in high school I played soccer and managed to become captain of my high school soccer team. We were not very good so it was definitely not based off skill. Uhm and in college I kind of found my own path and in the beginning picked up boxing and mixed martial arts and then found climbing and never turned back.

**Tell me about the 5 years prior to BUD/S, what were you doing? You said traveling, can you give me any specifics?**

Absolutely, so I worked for a medical non-profit, it's an operation called smile. It is based out of Virginia Beach. Uhm.. my job was a program coordinator, so they do surgical missions, yes they do maxillofacial surgery most cleft lips and cleft palates. So I would recruit the doctors on the mission and do their logistics and I would go and be the onground logistical support. So I did that for almost 3 years. Uhm which was incredible you know I got to go to some awesome locations uhm I went to the Democractic Republic of the Congo, I went to Malawi, Madagascar, uhh China 3 times.

**Did you get to pick where you went?**

No I got assigned. You can put preferences out there but, at the end of the day you’re just assigned.

**And that contributed to you seeing a lot of people less fortunate and having much worse days than you were?**

Mhm, there is one in particular that I can remember, it was in Congo. Uh there was a man, he brought his son, he was very quiet and just stayed in the back, you could tell he like didn’t really mix well with the rest of the people there and their families and I went and got a translator and talked to him and the reason was he was from a completely different part of the country that we were not doing recruiting in and it took him two weeks by boat to get there and this was his third try and the two years prior he'd come to the mission site cause he heard about it but we hadn’t had missions or they got cancelled and it took about I think three months pay for the journey and he made this twice and failed and finally the third time he came his child needed some surgery and I remember talking to him and I asked him like why would you sacrifice so much to come here for your son and he looked at as if I was a fool and said it’s my son why would I not. I will never forget the power of that man and his dedication. I honestly remember thinking of that during first phase and I was like you know he showed a lot of grit and resolve for his son and sacrificed a lot more than I did, ahh so.

**Do you consider yourself impulsive? Like do you have any tattoos that you got in the spur of the moment.**

Ahh yes, I am a little impulsive, I do have tattoos that were kind of spur of the moment. Actually I got two tattoos that were both spur of the moment and uhh I kinda own that and then yeah I am impulsive to like reckless behavior a little bit especially when it comes to like the outdoors.

**What were the most challenging components of BUD/S for you? So think about your hardest day ever at BUD/S? What motivated you to push through?**

Ahh, week 2 of first phase and it was the day we did logs. It was a Wednesday or tuesday. Uhh..

**So what made you get through that tough time?**

Yeah that was my best friend, he quit right before that. Uhm I did know what he was going through when he quit, then I did not do very well and I had about 3 instructors screaming at me telling me I should quit uhm I decided to quit but not until after lunch and I forgot to and I ended up at the next evolution and I was like I guess im here. What got me through? I think it was I’m stubborn, if I was going to go out it was going to be their choice not my own.

**Did you feel like you were supported by the group?**

Ahh no, no, ahh i was not.

**Would you say that today you are supported by the group?**

Uhh more so but I think I have a lot of the scars from ahh from that but yeah I think it’s changed a lot.

**What practices did you use to help yourself get through like did you have any physical or mental or spiritual that helped you get through the next evolution?**

Uhm I think self talk.

**I assume positive self talk?**

I mean yeah I think negative can also be empowering if you respond well to it but yeah uhh both and goal setting I guess.

**When you had to make a difficult decision during BUD/S? What went through your mind can you think of one decision that you struggled with and what did you think about that helped you?**

Uhh.. that's interesting, I can’t think of any specific instance or instances that uhh

**That’s okay, why do you think you were successful in completing BUD/S? What do you think it is that helped you be successful?**

So I heard this a lot beforehand and I heard people say you either have it or you don’t and that it is not anything else. Uhh I didn’t like that explanation and I always thought there was something more empirical and can boil it down to. I honestly don’t know, I laugh, cause everyday I wonder if they’re going to figure out that I am still here cause uhm I’m like I shouldn't be here uhm yeah imposter syndrome but also like laughing because I am in company of such great guys and I just feel so average and most things I just don't take for granite that I am here and I try to just enjoy everyday but I have no idea why I am still here.

**Did you notice anything different about those that quit or did not make it? Like what separated you from them?**

I think they from the people that I know that quit are

**Like your best friend?**

They just stopped believing in themselves or they just let it get to them in a way that you have to think about. You have to accept that it is not going to be very fun, you just gotta push on. If you let it like eat you up its gonna be

**How do you think this whole experience changed you as a person?**

Uhh it definitely made me stronger. It shows your strengths and weaknesses.

**Mentally or physically or…?**

Uhh mentally, physically, no surely not. It shows your weaknesses but it also allows you to play to your strengths when you see them come out and it teaches you, it really shows you that it is not about physical strength. It is all mental.

**Anything you think I should’ve asked you that you think it would help people interviewing to get it in here?**

I think the people who were successful and something that I did that also might have led to my success is taking ownership of your training before you come here. I know the navy puts out a lot of information on their own workouts ya know, but the guys who are here I think everyone took ownership over their training and did their own thing and kind of you know pursued their own workouts which is something that's translates to which they own the program.

You weren’t here passively actively wanted to mold themselves to work harder and if they had a problem they were active in fixing it opposed to those that were told they had a problem and were waiting for it to be fixed.