**TRANSCRIBER NAME: Nico Sbrocco**

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**Participant #: 99**

**Interviewer: Dr. Celeste Raver Luning**

Interviewer (Code in Blue)

Participant (Code in black)

Interviewer: OK, so again, you’re OK if I record this?

#99: Yes.

Interviewer: This is participant #99. Now I’m done with all the official things. I’m gonna put this really close to this so I can catch you.

#99: No worries.

Interviewer: I have a couple of really easy questions first. Tell me the number of siblings you have?

#99: 2 siblings.

Interviewer: 2 siblings. And where do you fall in the birth order?

#99: I am the youngest.

Interviewer: Youngest, OK. And then what is the gender of the..?

#99: My oldest is my sister, and the middle is my brother.

Interviewer: OK. Uhm, if you think of your life experiences, what might you describe as a crucible, or life shaping experience?

#99: Just BUD/S.

Interviewer: Really? Nothing going into it?

#99: No, nothing nearly as difficult.

Interviewer: What uh, anything like, I’ll get into more, I’m getting ahead of myself. What, uh, what made you want to do BUD/S?

#99: Uh, I grew up in a military family.

Interviewer: What branch?

#99: My father was a fighter pilot in the Air Force. All the way back for like four generations, all military. So I was interested in the military. Thought about going to the Air Force, but didn’t want to fly like my father. I learned about this when I was young. I was kinda drawn to the team aspect of it. I love the water, so it just kinda made sense.

Interviewer: OK. So did you move around a lot as a kid?

#99: Not too much, I lived in Connecticut and then Arizona. I only moved once with my dad’s job, then he got to stay in Arizona for a long time.

Interviewer: OK. What about your personality do you think contributed to making it through BUD/S?

#99: Even keel. I didn’t get really riled up when the instructors would get in our faces. I stayed pretty calm through most things.

Interviewer: Have you always been like that?

#99: Uh, no. I definitely, like as I matured, I dealt with things a lot better as I got older. So, like, when I was young, I threw temper tantrums like every kid. But then going to college, and high school especially, I matured, and developed an ability to deal with things as they come.

Interviewer: At what point in your life, like what age were you when you decided “I want to be a SEAL”?

#99: I was just home for Thanksgiving, and my mom found stuff that I wrote in Kindergarten.

Interviewer: Really?

#99: Yeah.

Interviewer: Wow, that’s really interesting!

#99: Yeah.

Interviewer: I don’t have enough time to ask you more about that \*laughs\*. But, uhm, so, the even keel piece, was that something that you purposely trained?

#99: My father did.

Interviewer: Really?

#99: My dad would get very upset with me. I would get in trouble if I had an outburst or if I let emotions control me. So my dad was always, uh, on me to make sure that I got a good handle on my emotions in a good way.

Interviewer: Interesting, OK. So, you talked a little bit about your background, and I’m gonna go a little deeper. Can you tell me a little bit about your childhood? How, some very specific questions. What was your parents parenting style?

#99: Definitely hands on. They were very involved with a lot of things. They made sure that we played sports, made sure we had good grades, and that we actually spent time studying. Uh, but they weren't like helicopter parents. They weren’t overbearing by any means. They were always there, they were, like, uh, if we needed something we could always go to our parents. Uh, I’m trying to think of a good way….my dad was gone a lot with the military, so when he was home, he was very present. I think that helped a lot. Uh, my first year ever playing football he was deployed to Iraq, and so he made sure that he parentes record every game and send it to him. Which was kinda cool. So he always tried his best, even though he wasn’t always around, to be as involved as possible, and make sure that we knew that they cared, they loved us, and at the same time, if we did stupid things, they would punish us, just like every…

Interviewer: So that’s my next question. So what was the, and it seems like a weird question, but what was their discipline approach? Like, were you spanked, were you put on time outs?

#99: Yeah. yeah. I mean like every kid probably time outs, then my dad would spank me, my mom would spank me. If we said bad words they would wash our mouths out with soap. We’d get grounded, like lose things, they'd take things away, like show that there's actual consequences in the world.

Interviewer: The whole gamut.

#99: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: What about your teenage years? You talked about how you played football, uhm, did you play any other team sports?

#99: Uh, I played baseball, uh, and as far as team goes, I was on a swim team, that's pretty much individual though.. I shot competitively and I ran track.

Interviewer: Any other kind of team or group activities beyond sports?

#99: I was in boy scouts and then I was in the student government of my high school. So as far as teams go that’s about it.

Interviewer: What about when you moved, and you said you moved from Connecticut to Arizona, how old were you?

#99: I was 6 months. I was really..

Interviewer: Oh so you were little? And then you stayed in Arizona?

#99: Yup.

Interviewer: That’s kinda lucky.

#99: Yeah, my dad went into the reserves so we just got to stay in Arizona.

Interviewer: Anything else about your teenage years that were kinda formative, or stand out?

#99: Growing up in Arizona was great because I was forced to do a lot of outdoors stuff. So I grew up in the woods and mountains, which I think really helped here, just being really comfortable with being outside. Actually working with my hand. Like I was used to doing physical things outside. I think that was helpful.

Interviewer: Now I don’t know where you’re coming from directly, but if there were five years between highschool and coming into here, but if so, what were you doing those five years?

#99: I went to the Naval Academy.

Interviewer: OK.

#99: So four years of college there and then I took the last class available from my graduating year so it took me a full year after graduation to get out here to start.

Interviewer: OK, so in that time in particular, what was your Naval Academy experience, and what was your extra time as an Ensign, I’m assuming you were a TAD Ensign, so what was that time like?

#99: It was great, I liked the Academy. If I got to go back with the same outcome I would do it again in a heartbeat, but it was not my favorite place. I hated the Academy. I wanted to leave, I got talked into staying, which I’m glad I did. I tried out for the water polo team, the triathlon team, the combat arms team, got cut from everything, so I had a hard time finding where I fit in until I joined the parachute team and then stuck with that that was really fun. I learned a lot there about high stress environments, and how to actually work when your life kinda depends on it. So that was great. I got involved with the leadership conference at the Naval Academy, so I learned how to delegate and do leadership type things there. Post graduation, doing TAD was helpful because that time to train before we came out here so we were physically ready, but nothing really formative as far as like, uh, my personality.

Interviewer: Now, would you consider yourself, during that time frame, at the Academy, impulsive at all, or were any of your behaviors impulsive?

#99: I wouldn’t say I was very impulsive, maybe my freshman year, plebe year at the Naval Academy, I would make impulsive decisions, but nothing that I can think of after that was like impulsive which led me to anything negative.

Interviewer: And, uhm, do you have any tattoos?

#99: No tattoos.

Interviewer: Any speeding tickets?

#99: Yeah, I have one speeding ticket.

Interviewer: OK.

#99: ...That i still have to deal with. I just got it here.

Interviewer: So it’s a recent thing?

#99: Yeah. Recent.

Interviewer: What motivates you on a daily basis?

#99: Uhm, I’d say my family.

Interviewer: So, uhm, immediate family, or other family?

#99: Uh, family, my wife, my siblings, my parents, my sister just had a baby right before we started hell week and I wrote her name, my new niece’s name in my hat during hell week, and I, like, would look at that and remember there’s more than just me. It’s about something bigger than just myself.

Interviewer: What do you think was the most challenging component of BUD/S? Whether it was broader, or a single event, or day?

#99: Uh, the daily grind, especially in third phase, it was like the same things, very monotonous, every day, for, whatever it was, 28 days, with no breaks. So you had to be 100% focused all the time otherwise you could kinda lose track and not perform as well. So just maintaining that same level of performance for an extended period of time without any time to decompress.

Interviewer: So what motivated you to push through that daily grind?

#99: I think that was just like experiences leading up from the rest of BUD/S. Like knowing that there’s a purpose in the end.It kinda reminds you like oh there's a purpose why we have to be out here to learn all these different skills so we can move on to the next part. Kinda like the ending was the goal, so you knew what was coming.

Interviewer: No what, was there anything, did you feel there waas group support while you were here or was it more individual?

#99: Definitely group support. I came out here with four other ensigns from the Naval Academy. We lived together, we trained together for the full year before coming out here. We were all kinda each other's support group coming out here. Even though we didn't say it, we were all there for each other and knew we could count on one another and you wanted to support them as best as you could and support each other. Then the people here, obviously, once you get past hell week, after that, you really start developing bonds with people and you become a support group for each other. That’s the best part about this place, is the people.

Interviewer: What about, what practices, were there any specific practices, whether they were physical, mental, spiritual, that you performed as you progressed through BUD/S?

#99: Uh, for big things that were test gates, visualization was a big thing. Specifically like pool comp, OC8, in second phase, when there's all these procedures you have to go through to make sure that you finish the test, under stress, like visualization before and then during, like OK, and talking myself through the steps, I would know what to do. I think visualization was a huge help for me.

Interviewer: Uh, when you made a difficult decision during BUD/S here during the training, what went through your mind? If there was any kind of difficult decisions.

#99: That's a good question. Uhm, making difficult decisions, I would try to always remember what the end state was, like the end goal, and I think basically, if the decision would help lead us to that desired end result, then that's what had to be done. There's really no easy way here, so if it was hard, it didn't really make a difference because everything was always hard here no matter what. It was almost easier to make the right decision in BUD/S, because everything was hard as it was.

Interviewer: So it wasn’t like “Oh this is easy \*indecipherable\*”

#99: Yeah.

Interviewer: Now, what about, do you think you can give any specific examples of where you might have had some massive decision you had to make.

#99: Not in BUD/S. Not really, uh, everything is pretty laid out for us, you don’t have to make a lot of decisions, it’s just show up, perform, and make sure you have everything you need.

Interviewer: Were there anything ethical or moral decisions you had to make?

#99: Thankfully, I didn’t really face a lot of things that...like, there’s shortcuts that can be taken, that you know can be taken, and knowing the difference of when it was maybe OK to take shortcuts and when it was not OK to take shortcuts, that could be an ethical decision. If it would affect other people negatively, then no we didn't do those things, but if it’s not gonna hurt anyone other than maybe myself, like sleeping in a boat when we’re paddling around the world during hell week, like, yeah we did that, we slept in the boat.

Interviewer: Just to get the couple seconds of…\*indecipherable\*

#99: Yeah. Exactly. But major things that would affect the whole class or affect anyone else if you were found out, like no we didn’t, and I didn’t personally do that because we wanted to make sure the other guys were taken care of because that’s our job.

Interviewer: What do you think made you successful?

#99: I think I was successful because I never gave myself the option of leaving. Especially as an officer, if you leave you're done. You never get a chance to come back. I experienced life on a ship, I never wanted to go back to that, just my opinion. My family... I didn't want to let my family down. If I quit here, I would never be able to forgive myself, now would I be able to forgive, I feel like I would have let my family down, my wife down, everyone that ever supported me. I was never here on my own, I never would have gotten here on my own in the first place. People had to throw their hat in the ring for me and I would have let those people down. And I would have taken a spot from someone else. That would have all weighed on me very heavily if I would have quit.

Interviewer: What about, uhm, do you think there’s any difference between what you saw of the people that made it and the people that didn’t make it?

#99: I mean you would look at kids the first day and be like “Oh, he looks like a stud, he’s gonna make it” and then they quit the first day. Nothing physically was indicative of who was gonna make it. I think once you get to know people, after hell week, you’re like yeah, obviously you made it, you had a crazy life, you had all these great experiences, but at the same time, those guys obviously would make it, and those guys were just regular joes who show up and for whatever reason they just have that internal motivation or drive to make it. I don’t think there’s any…

Interviewer: ...one answer?

#99: No.

Interviewer: Well, those are all my questions. Thank you and congratulations.

#99: Thank you very much ma'am, I appreciate it.