**Episode 26 – Humility vs. Ego**

**INFORMATION:** Discuss the dichotomy between humility and ego.

**History Segment: Master-at-Arms Second Class (SEAL) Michael Monsoor**

[www.navy.mil/ah\_online/moh/monsoor.html](http://www.navy.mil/ah_online/moh/monsoor.html)

Petty Officer Second Class Michael Anthony Monsoor was born April 5, 1981 in Long Beach, Calif. Michael grew up in Garden Grove, Calif., as the third of four children of George and Sally Monsoor. He has an older brother James and older sister Sara, and a younger brother Joseph.

Michael attended Dr. Walter C. Ralston Intermediate School and Garden Grove High School where he played tight end on the Argonaut football team and graduated in 1999. An incredible athlete, Mike enjoyed snowboarding, body boarding, spear fishing, motorcycle riding, and driving his Corvette. His quiet demeanor and dedication to his friends matched the "Silent Warrior" SEAL mentality that was to become his calling in life.

Michael enlisted in the U.S. Navy March 21, 2001, and attended Basic Training at Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Ill. Upon graduation from basic training, he attended Quartermaster "A" School, and then transferred to Naval Air Station, Sigonella, Italy for a short period of time.

Petty Officer Monsoor entered Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training in Coronado, Calif., and subsequently graduated with Class 250 on Sept. 2, 2004 as one of the top performers in his class. After BUD/S, he completed advanced SEAL training courses including parachute training at Basic Airborne School, Fort Benning, Ga., cold weather combat training in Kodiak, Alaska, and six months of SEAL Qualification Training in Coronado, graduating in March 2005. The following month, his rating changed from Quartermaster to Master-at-Arms, and he was assigned to SEAL Team 3 Delta Platoon. He deployed with his platoon to Iraq in April 2006 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and was assigned to Task Unit Bravo in Ar Ramadi.

From April to Sept. 29, 2006, Mike served as a heavy weapons machine gunner in Delta Platoon, SEAL Team 3. During combat patrols he walked behind the platoon point man with his Mk 48 machinegun so that he could protect his platoon from a frontal enemy attack. Mike was also a SEAL communicator. On 15 operations, he carried a rucksack full of communications equipment in addition to his machinegun and full ammunition load-out. Collectively it weighed more than 100 pounds. He bore the weight without a single complaint, even in the midst of the 130 degree Western Iraqi summer.

Mike and his platoon operated in a highly contested part of Ramadi city called the Ma'laab district. During their deployment, Mike and his fellow SEALS came under enemy attack on 75 percent of their missions. On May 9, 2006 Mike rescued a SEAL who was shot in the leg. He ran out into the street with another SEAL, shot cover fire and dragged his comrade to safety while enemy bullets kicked up the concrete at their feet. For this brave action, he earned a Silver Star.

The enemy could not deter Michael and his SEAL platoon. They fought in 35 heated firefights; during these incidents Mike shot tens of thousands of 7.62 millimeter rounds to cover Delta Platoon's movement through streets that seemed to be paved with fire. In the Ma'laab district, Michael perfected his skills as an urban machine gunner. Once he and his men established a sniper overwatch position, he deftly transitioned to his role as a SEAL communicator calling in tank support and transmitting enemy situation reports to the 1-506 PIR Commander.

Delta Platoon executed a broad spectrum of combat operations in and around Ramadi. They patrolled bravely through the city streets engaging in firefights while on other occasions, they ambushed insurgent mortar teams near the banks of the Euphrates River. Mike and his fellow SEALs accounted for 84 enemy fighters killed in action and the detainment of numerous insurgents. Most notably, the Army Infantry, Navy SEAL and Iraqi Army combined force helped to pacify the most violent city in Al Anbar province setting conditions for the Sunni Awakening.

Petty Officer Monsoor was subsequently awarded the Bronze Star as the Task Unit Ramadi, Iraq Combat Advisor from April to September 2006. His leadership, guidance and decisive actions during 11 different combat operations saved the lives of his teammates, other Coalition Forces and Iraqi Army soldiers.

Petty Officer Second Class (SEAL) Michael A. Monsoor will receive the Medal of Honor posthumously in a ceremony at the White House April 8, 2008. He will receive the award for his actions in Ar Ramadi, Iraq on Sept. 29, 2006. On that day, Monsoor was part of a sniper overwatch security position with three other SEALs and eight Iraqi Army (IA) soldiers. An insurgent closed in and threw a fragmentation grenade into the overwatch position. The grenade hit Monsoor in the chest before falling to the ground. Positioned next to the single exit, Monsoor was the only one who could have escaped harm. Instead, he dropped onto the grenade to shield the others from the blast. Monsoor died approximately 30 minutes later from wounds sustained from the blast. Because of Petty Officer Monsoor's actions, he saved the lives of his 3 teammates and the IA soldiers.

Though he carried himself in a calm and composed fashion, he constantly led the charge to bring the fight to the enemy. His teammates recall his sense of loyalty to God, family, and his team. He attended Catholic Mass devotionally before operations, and often spoke lovingly of his family - his older brother, a police officer and former Marine for whom he held great respect; his sister, a nurse; and his younger brother, a college football player.

Mike was one of the bravest men on the battlefield, never allowing the enemy to discourage him. He remained fearless while facing constant danger, and through his selfless nature and aggressive actions, saved the lives of coalition soldiers and his fellow SEALs. He was a loyal friend and exceptional SEAL, and he is sorely missed by his brothers in Task Unit Bravo.

He is survived by his mother Sally, his father George, his sister Sara, and his two brothers James and Joseph.

MASTER-AT-ARMS SECOND CLASS (SEA, AIR AND LAND) MICHAEL A. MONSOOR

UNITED STATES NAVY

For service set forth in the following

CITATION:

FOR CONSPICUOUS GALLANTRY AND INTREPIDITY AT THE RISK OF HIS LIFE ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY AS AUTOMATIC WEAPONS GUNNER FOR NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE TASK GROUP ARABIAN PENINSULA, IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2006. AS A MEMBER OF A COMBINED SEAL AND IRAQI ARMY SNIPER OVERWATCH ELEMENT, TASKED WITH PROVIDING EARLY WARNING AND STAND-OFF PROTECTION FROM A ROOFTOP IN AN INSURGENT HELD SECTOR OF AR RAMADI, IRAQ, PETTY OFFICER MONSOOR DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF BY HIS EXCEPTIONAL BRAVERY IN THE FACE OF GRAVE DANGER. IN THE EARLY MORNING, INSURGENTS PREPARED TO EXECUTE A COORDINATED ATTACK BY RECONNOITERING THE AREA AROUND THE ELEMENT'S POSITION. ELEMENT SNIPERS THWARTED THE ENEMY'S INITIAL ATTEMPT BY ELIMINATING TWO INSURGENTS. THE ENEMY CONTINUED TO ASSAULT THE ELEMENT, ENGAGING THEM WITH A ROCKET-PROPELLED GRENADE AND SMALL ARMS FIRE. AS ENEMY ACTIVITY INCREASED, PETTY OFFICER MONSOOR TOOK POSITION WITH HIS MACHINE GUN BETWEEN TWO TEAMMATES ON AN OUTCROPPING OF THE ROOF. WHILE THE SEALS VIGILANTLY WATCHED FOR ENEMY ACTIVITY, AN INSURGENT THREW A HAND GRENADE FROM AN UNSEEN LOCATION, WHICH BOUNCED OFF PETTY OFFICER MONSOOR'S CHEST AND LANDED IN FRONT OF HIM. ALTHOUGH ONLY HE COULD HAVE ESCAPED THE BLAST, PETTY OFFICER MONSOOR CHOSE INSTEAD TO PROTECT HIS TEAMMATES. INSTANTLY AND WITHOUT REGARD FOR HIS OWN SAFETY, HE THREW HIMSELF ONTO THE GRENADE TO ABSORB THE FORCE OF THE EXPLOSION WITH HIS BODY, SAVING THE LIVES OF HIS TWO TEAMMATES. BY HIS UNDAUNTED COURAGE, FIGHTING SPIRIT, AND UNWAVERING DEVOTION TO DUTY IN THE FACE OF CERTAIN DEATH, PETTY OFFICER MONSOOR GALLANTLY GAVE HIS LIFE FOR HIS COUNTRY, THEREBY REFLECTING GREAT CREDIT UPON HIMSELF AND UPHOLDING THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE UNITED STATES NAVAL SERVICE.

SIGNED GEORGE W. BUSH I.

“On 29 September (2006), Monsoor was part of a sniper overwatch security position in eastern Ramadi, Iraq, with three other SEALs and eight Iraqi soldiers. They were providing overwatch security while joint and combined forces were conducting missions in the area. Ramadi had been a violent and intense area for a very strong and aggressive insurgency for some time. All morning long the overwatch position received harassment fire that had become a typical part of the day for the security team. Around midday, the exterior of the building was struck by a single rocket propelled grenade (RPG), but no injuries to any of the overwatch personnel were sustained. The overwatch couldn’t tell where the RPG came from and didn’t return fire.”“A couple of hours later, an insurgency fighter closed on the overwatch position and threw a fragment grenade into the overwatch position which hit Monsoor in the chest before falling in front of him. Monsoor yelled, “Grenade!” and dropped on top of the grenade prior to it exploding. Monsoor’s body shielded the others from the brunt of the fragmentation blast and two other SEALs were only wounded by the remaining blast.”

“One of the key aspects of this incident was the way the overwatch position was structured. There was only one access point for entry or exit and Monsoor was the only one who could have saved himself from harm. Instead, knowing what the outcome would be, he fell on the grenade to save the others from harm. Monsoor and the two injured were evacuated to the combat outpost battalion aid station where Monsoor died approximately 30 minutes after the incident from injuries sustained by the grenade blast.”

Also due to Monsoor’s selfless actions, the fourth man of the SEAL squad who was 10-15 feet from the blast, was unhurt. A 28-year-old Lieutenant, who sustained shrapnel wounds to both legs that day, said the following in crediting Monsoor with saving his life: “He never took his eye off the grenade – his only movement was down toward it. He undoubtedly saved mine and the other SEALs’ lives, and we owe him.”

As Kristen Scharnberg of the ChicagoTribune summarized in tribute, “The men who were there that day say they could see the options flicker across Michael Mansoor’s face: save himself or save the men he had long considered brothers. He chose them.”

**Introduction**

 A. Attention (I have an ego. So do you, and sometimes, it gets the better of me. Those moments are generally teachable and start with my being wrong or failing.)

 B. Motivation (Junior Sailors should be first focused on being good FOLLOWERS, as this humility and team centric attitude is CRITICAL to their success when they transition into LEADERSHIP positions.)

 C. Overview (IT’S NOT ABOUT YOU. NO ONE OWES YOU ANYTHING. YOU ARE NOT ENTITLED TO ANYTHING. You’re NOT the smartest person in the world. You may not be the smartest person in the room! And even if you were, WHO CARES. You should have your mind open to learning from anyone. From anywhere. From any source, level of experience, background, etc. It doesn’t MATTER. You will NEVER know everything. Sometimes you forget what you did know. Or someone can teach you a BETTER WAY. They could HELP you complete a task better and faster. Ego can be a barrier to you growing as a person and leader. Humility is the cheat code, and we’re going to talk about both. )

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**II. Body**

 A. Main Point 1 (What is Ego?) – a person's sense of self-esteem or self-importance: the part of the mind that mediates between the conscious and the unconscious and is responsible for reality testing and a sense of personal identity.

 1. Sub-point (Self-importance) – Ego is your own self importance. I think it can be confused with being overly prideful, and they are in the same lane. But your Ego itself, isn’t all bad. Putting yourself FIRST, isn’t all bad. Allowing it to run wild is where we find problem.

 2. Sub-point (Insecurity) – Running pretty contrary to what we PERCIEVE ego to be, an ego run amuck generally starts with INSECURITY! Someone whose ego is out of control is generally an over-compensation for what that person views as a weakness! Think about it? The times that someone has to tell you over and over what they can do and how well they can do it. Would they need to do that if they were showing people they could through action?

 3. Sub-point (False Self Image) – If you have ever worked with a legitimate ego maniac, and I have, they play this role so often that many times they begin to believe their own material. It creates a HUGE blind spot for them in leadership. If you perceive yourself to be viewed one way by peers/subordinates/leaders and they ACTUALLY view you completely differently, that’s going to destroy your ability to communicate with your team! They will not receive you or respect you in they way you may believe they do. It can erode mission accomplishment right under your nose and the worst part is – you wouldn’t know why! (Blind Spot).

 B. Main Point 2 (Humility): Humility is your solution. By being humble in all phases, you keep your mind open. You can take pride in the work you do while being a humble leader. I’d make the case that a healthy ego tempered with humility will make you an even BETTER leader.

 1. Sub-point (Feedback) – My FAVORITE part of humility, is FEEDBACK. You need to be okay with feedback. You need to be open to it. ENCOURAGE IT. You WANT people to point out your flaws. Because that means you’re AWARE of what you need to attack. You welcome people showing you ways to get better. It’s free leadership development, on the spot, from the people you’re leading! It’s a damn cheat code, man! If you make it okay for them to tell you when you’re wrong, to tell you when you’re weak, and to tell you when we could be doing something better…then you can get better! You can get ahead of those things and be right and be strong, and do better.

 2. Sub-point (Trusted Ally) – Find a sounding board! Because everyone in the organization will either a) not be comfortable providing you this feedback or b) lie to you. You’re the boss! There will be folks that are intimidated by doing this or think that you’ll hold onto that feedback and punish them for it later. And that’s completely natural! You’re human, just like them. So you need to find someone you trust that is NOT afraid to tell you like it is. That person will not only give you the unadulterated truth but also help you filter through the other feedback. This way, you get it from multiple sources, but aren’t acting (or not) on the feedback you get from someone that’s worried about it affecting your perception of them.

 3. Sub-point (Daily Grind) – Make your humility ROUTINE. Practice it daily. If you assess, you confer with your trusted advisors, and you identify the areas you’re weak in. The areas you allow your ego to take control, use that. Find them in your daily routine and then CONCIOUSLY DECIDE to be humble in that moment. You’ll be floored at what you learn. The more you practice this, like any habit, the better you’ll become at it. You’ll frequently find yourself reacting much differently to situations you deal with regularly and see positive growth in your team AND YOU.

 C. Main Point 3 (Is Ego BAD?): Ego is a thing. You have it. We all do. And like almost all leadership principles, the answer is: it depends. A strong, healthy ego can be a great asset linked strongly to what I talked about in episode 24 (Leadership Confidence). They’re basically the same principle with a different name. Having a strong, healthy ego is you confident in who you are, comfortable with your identity and ready to tackle any challenge put in your lane WHILE BEING HUMBLE ENOUGH TO KNOW, YOU CANNOT DO IT ALONE AND THERE ARE ALWAYS LESSONS TO BE HAD AS YOU GO. Ego has negative connotations to it because it’s confidence and pride gone WAY TO FAR. It’s when you mix in those insecurities and lose control of it. Ego taking control of you vice you controlling that ego (confidence) is what leads you into trouble. It’s when you put yourself before the team. It’s when only your opinion matters. It’s when you’re ALWAYS right. These are toxic, and are probably what will degrade a team’s cohesiveness and mission accomplishment faster than anything else. You will destroy the team’s TRUST in you. They will stop communicating and the worst version, they will begin conspiring against you. (COB story…)

**III. Conclusion**

 A. Summary (We talked about…)

 1. What ego is…

 2. How ego is balanced with humility and how…

 3. And whether ego is bad or not and why…

 B. Re-motivation (Junior Sailors need to be aware of ego, how it can SO EASILY take control of you and what negative impacts that entails in order to succeed as junior level leaders.)

 C. Closing – Ego is dangerous. If you asked people who think they know me or worked for me, I believe they would tell you that I have a healthy ego and that I like myself a lot. And they wouldn’t be wrong! But I can tell you a lot of what I do as a leader is designed that way. I want them to believe I’m in command. I want them to believe I am good at my job. That I’m comfortable making the hard decisions. That I’ve GOT IT. Because I do. I want them to know that, take comfort in that, and not worry about leadership issues. I GOT IT. That keeps them focused on the mission, which I can’t accomplish without THEM. Everything I do is designed through the premise of TAKING CARE OF THE TEAM, SO THE TEAM CAN TAKE CARE OF THE MISSION. It’s what I believe I’m here to do. If you asked people close to me, who know me well and see right through my “ego”…they know that. They know that every single thing I do is for them. For our Sailors. And if they trust me, deep down, so do the junior ones. That’s leadership confidence…

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