



In My Own Words

Raider Grace Folts

“In Their Words.” Ask me about Raiders, and I’ll ask you where I should start. I could start at O-dark-hundred with CSM singing loudly to wake us up. I could begin by telling you what we do in competitions, our successes, or our records. I could even start by telling you how smart, how fit, and genuinely amazing one must be to make a varsity Raider team, but none of these descriptions would do Raiders justice. When you report to any formation for Raiders, whether you are leading the formation, holding the guide-on, standing at attention hoping you got to formation fast enough, or holding the 1SG’s clip-board, look right, look left, and see where Raiders starts.

Raiders is an amazing sport. It truly is. Don’t be mistaken; I hated waking up at 0500 on a Saturday morning for competitions. I hated going to school an hour early for morning runs. I hate running in August and July and September. There is so much effort that goes into Raiders, particularly as the Commander. There is all the planning, you have to communicate with ALL your underlings, be on the same sheet of music with everyone around you, get to know your cadets, appease all Raider coaches- it’s a tough job. I’m not going to lie, there are a few times where all I wanted to do was walk out.

The reason I never walked out were those buddies to my left and right. They are worth waking up super early, they are worth all the running July, they are worth giving up Saturdays, weekdays, Friday night parties, and even missing the premiers of Star Trek, The hobbit and even the Huger Games...without Raiders I would have genuinely hated high school. These friends get you through so much. You make memories together. You laugh together, cry together, win together, lose...wait...we don’t lose... win together, get hurt together, overcome injuries next to each other, die together. You know each other so well, you know what they are thinking when they think it. There are so many inside jokes you could talk in inside jokes the whole day and still have more jokes to get to. Nothing without

Raiders is the same. I have made life-long friends on the Raider team. I could not be a part of any more amazing a team.

To those I lead, there is nothing more inspiring to me than you. You might not be the most fit, or the smartest, but every practice you show up, ready and waiting for my next command. You keep me coming back, and you all are such an amazing bunch of people. Never give up on yourselves or each other.

To those with whom I lead, never underestimate each other. Work as a team and I promise you life will be much more enjoyable. Try to include everyone, even the weird kid in the corner. Focus everything around teamwork, because without it, your team will literally fall to pieces around you and there's nothing you will be able to do about it. You are who they look up to... don't waste their admiration- take advantage of it to build them up.

To the parents of the cadets I lead, it has been my honor and an absolute privilege to get to know your children. They are all amazing individuals and I have been blessed to have known each and every last one of them. Thank you for all your support. We kids can't get through life without a supportive parent or two to help get us through!

Finally, to those with whom I competed, there are no words to display the gratitude I have for each and every one of you. You are all absolutely incredible. I owe so much to you. You have seen me at my best and worst, and have been there for me no matter what I was going through. I'll never forget any of you. Never give up on each other. Never. I can't thank any of you enough for what you have done for me.

The people on this team make everything better. They inspire you, motivate you, encourage you, comfort you. There is no replacement for them. Take advantage of all they have to offer. You'll never regret it.