

Maryn Gulledge

Frampton/Martinez

Socratic 5/6

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Identity Crisis

Maryn Alayna Gulledge. Track and Field. NHS. AP Art. Rock climber. Gymnastics coach. That's what you'll hear when my name is called at graduation. If you don't know me, now you do, I guess. I wanted to put "gymnast" on the list but it didn't make the cut because technically I'm not a gymnast anymore.

I started gymnastics at our city rec center when I was four years old and before I knew it once a week lessons turned into four hour practices Monday through Friday. I loved the sound of medals clinking as they bounced off my sparkly leotard when I walked out of a competition. I loved it even when I walked out with tear stained cheeks and taped up ankles. I loved the fun games my coaches had us play and the dumb dances we made up during practice. I loved it even when the AC broke in the middle of summer and we still had to do conditioning. I loved cheering nicknames and tackling my teammates with hugs and high fives after they got a personal best. I loved it even when I chose to say goodbye to them.

As Sophomore year came around, the head coach had a conversation with my mom and said, "I'm going to say that college gymnastics just isn't in the cards for her." This hurt more than a slap in the face. Collegiate gymnastics has been my goal for as long as the signed posters of BYU's 2012 team were up on my ceiling. Even though these dream crushing words gave me the perfect topic to write my Best Scar Essay about, it left me questioning everything.

When my dad introduces our family he always says, starting with Jordan (not Meagan), “This is my dancer, then I have my two gymnasts, my artist, a singer, and a crazy toddler.” So when I stopped doing gymnastics I remember asking, “What am I now dad?”

This is when I went through a midlife identity crisis as a 15 year old. The hardest choice I’ve ever had to make was to retire from gymnastics, after 12 dedicated years of it being the most important part of my life. Until that point, being a gymnast was my entire identity. But I want you all to know I didn’t quit just because someone told me I’m not good enough; I retired from gymnastics because after countless pro/con lists and prayers, I decided there was more to high school than I wanted to experience. I wanted to take a class for fun, not just because I needed it to graduate. I wanted one of those fancy pins you put on your blazer that gives you the power to decide what theme homecoming decorations will be. I wanted to wear one of the very flattering Maeser sports uniforms and have my UHSSA stats come up when you google my name. But what I really wanted was to be more than just a gymnast.

That’s when I began to realize it’s not the things we do that define us, it’s who we are; but what we do can help shape us into who we are. Being a gymnast isn’t my identity, but doing gymnastics did help make me who I am. My dad wasn’t wrong when he introduced me as a gymnast, but he also didn’t give the complete picture. He put me under a label, boiling me down to the bullet points of what I do for the sake of keeping an introduction short. So, while I have your attention, let’s try this again.

Maryn Alayna Gullledge. Will give it my all even when I know I won’t win. In my happy place when things are organized. Too scared to eat pancakes or talk to anyone on 7th grade day. Can’t get me to be quiet around friends and can eat more than you’d think. Cries when Mrs. Frampton gives 5/6 Socratic another poetry assignment. Can’t live a day without chapstick.

Uncomfortable around animals, especially when middle schoolers act like them. Convinced my mood is directly correlated to whether or not the sun is out. Senior in the class of 2021, even if Mr. Watabe never remembers I am. Not just a gymnast.