

## CREW

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## Same Family

When I was younger, I thought Cô Hương was my aunt. I was disappointed to learn that we did not, in fact, share the same blood, but she was still family. All of Truong Son is family. And what's the family without the drama right? But no matter how complicated things get or how long I have been gone from Scouts, Truong Son still welcomes me back with exploding enthusiasm and open arms. Well, actually mostly just Vivian Ha and Tiffany Tieu, my unadopted little sisters. Everyone else just says, "What's up?" and we continue as if I had never been gone, because the truth is, I never actually left. Truong Son is the home of both my real family and my friends, the family I got to choose.

I started Scouts to be with my real family. My Dad, Tr. Trung, one of the most hardworking people I know, and my older brother, Alex, have modeled my life after in so many ways, though you will rarely ever hear me admit that. They were, and still are in many ways, my role models even at four years old. I wanted to be a Scout, just like they were, for the longest time. After what seemed to be a lifetime of waiting, I finally, finally turned six, able to register as a Cub Scout.

Just like many things in life, it wasn't all that it seemed. Nobody told me I had to miss cartoons every Saturday morning and that I couldn't sleep in anymore. All my friends at school couldn't stop talking about how Yu-Gi summoned Exodia in the most clutch moment during last weekend's duel and all I had was, "Look guys, I can tie a square knot." Was I making a mistake? Being a kid, without having cable, knowing that Saturday mornings were the only time of the week I could watch cartoons, you can understand that it was a tough decision. That's where my second family comes in. The ones I continued to do Scouts for. The family I chose, my friends, or to be honest, the family that I was lucky enough to choose me.

First, I do have to quickly thank my Mom, Đào Hứa, for waking me up every weekend, finding my neckerchief each weekend (I would sometimes hide it as an excuse not to go to meetings and I had no idea how she would find it every time...), and dragging me out to the park. She would say, "One day, you'll thank me for this." I would roll my eyes, finding it impossible to believe that would ever happen. Well, that day has come. So thank you Mom, for knowing me better than myself, for making me do the things I need to do but hate most, and most of all, for being a pretty cool Mom. Much cooler than I ever gave you credit for when I was younger. This must be one of those, "Wow, I really am getting old" moments that people talk about. I never thought this day would come... Hey, look Alex! I guess I am growing up!

Anyway, back to the brothers from another mother and the sisters from different misters. I'll be the first to tell you I was an awkward kid. I didn't really talk much, lacked self-confidence, and kept to myself a lot. Sometimes I was scared to have fun and even more scared to make mistakes. I was the son of Tr. Trung and the little brother of Alex Hua. Nothing like the sole heir to the throne of Gondor and the Seven Kingdoms with the Knights at the Round Table or anything like that but it was still scary. One, I didn't want to do anything that might make my Dad look bad and, two, Alex was the closest thing to a celebrity at Scouts. He was patrol leader, senior patrol leader, and any position that had the word leader, really. He was athletic and smart, everyone loved him – he knew how to do everything.

Girls had crushes on him and even guys would tell me he had nice forearm muscles. Not going to name names or anything but you all know who you are. He was the cool big brother and as proud as I was to have him be my brother, it took me awhile to really find my own identity. Even today, I still struggle with these things but the people I met at Scouts showed me that it was okay to be silly, as long as you were responsible, to make mistakes, as long as you learned from them and to try your best, even when you feel at your worst. They were there for me unconditionally, even when I didn't think I deserved their support. You can understand why I say I'm the lucky one and why I call them my family.

Coming this far wasn't an easy path and anyone that knows me can attest to this but I wouldn't have changed any of it. The memories are things I continue to laugh about to this day and stories I will surely tell my grandchildren about. From shooting rubber band guns in collapsing tents to playing chess at camp with some kid we named Jesus. Questionable fantasy basketball trades to dancing to "Last Christmas" (somebody please destroy those tapes). Shooting boba at each other's tents in the rain to getting locked up in a garage until we ate all the Korean BBQ. Making T-shirts at my house to attacking grass monsters. Even rick rolling as a skit and having instant noodle eating competitions. These are just a few of the countless memories that come to mind as I am sitting on top of a hill, overlooking LA. It's a bit windy and chilly but reliving all these memories is keeping me nice and warm. There's too many people to shout-out but you know who you are and I want you to know that you mean more to me than I will ever be able to thank you for. I am who I am because of you.

The best part about coming back to Truong Son is seeing the similar effect it has on the younger generation of Scouts. So many of them have begun to grow up into honest, strong-willed, and all around fantastic individuals that I often find myself looking up to. People like Tiffany, Vivian, Rosa and Vinh Thuc have grown up and taken charge, leaving their own mark on Truong Son. Wow, now I'm really feeling old. I should wrap this up or else by the time I get off this bench I'll need a cane to walk around.

I owe so much to this family, the leaders, the parents, the friends, and anyone that ever dedicated any time to Truong Son. I've never left because Truong Son is always a part of me, and will always be a part of me. The future will be a long and scary one but I like my chances knowing that I'll have the support of my family, both my blood family and my Scout family. If you had any experience in Truong Son you know exactly how I feel. Here's to many more years of growing old together as a family.

