Homenetmen: A Worldwide Family

I have my parents to thank for a lot of things: the roof over my head, the clothes on my back and the food in my mouth. But, these generic things aside they also took me to church every Sunday, taught me Armenian and, when I was five years old, they enrolled me in Homenetmen. Fourteen years later I still attend every Saturday.

Growing up in the Diaspora, Homenetmen is the one thing that has remained constant. My closest friendships have come from being an Armenian scout. We are like a family: everybody plays a role. We call each other “brother” and “sister”. When we go camping we eat, live and breathe together. When we meet other Homenetmen scouts from around the world it’s like discovering long lost cousins; there is an instant bond. After all, we have all been cut from the same cloth.

This has been proven time and time again to be true. Every four years, Homenetmen chapters from all over the world convene in Armenia for a Jamboree. It’s like a normal camp, but on a much larger scale. The defining factor is that it takes place in our homeland – an environment where our language and culture becomes our single commonality. This adds an intriguing dimension to the usual camping experience. The extreme conditions of the Pyuragan mountains, the venue for this great occasion, results in a heightened sense of belonging and love for our Fatherland. It also epitomises the feeling that no matter where in the world a Homenetmenagan goes, they will have a family through the organisation that first brought them together.

I have always known that Homenetmen was an important part of my life, but taking part in the 9th Jamboree has added a spark to my regular scouting life. Following on from the camp, I used all mediums of modern technology and social networking to keep contact with the numerous friends I made from across the world, desperate to remain in the bubble of Pyuragan, where all we did was be Armenian, with other Armenians. My efforts to maintain this paid off. When I visited Canada this summer to see my family, I was greeted by the friends that Homenetmen introduced me to through that one Jamboree. As luck would have it, friends from other countries were also in Canada for the summer, and when we met it was as if no time had passed at all. The effort and enthusiasm they had in showing me their cities was overwhelming, and the thought that was constant in my mind was ‘How in 10 days could we have become so close?’

I consider myself lucky that I was born Armenian, and luckier still that I was born into a family who laid me in Homenetmen’s arms. While growing up and facing the everyday difficulties of life, it’s a quiet comfort to know that somewhere in the world there will always be a brother or sister connected to me; perhaps not by blood, but through something so powerful that it drives us to spend our lives dedicated to it.

— Arda Haladjian