

"Do you want to go to Space Camp this summer?" This question arose during a conversation with my mother when I was in seventh grade. I actually thought she was just joking when she first said it. She told me she wanted me to experience immersion in another culture and language. When she was in college, she had received an opportunity to go to America, but she had to give up this chance because her mother became sick. As a result, she strongly recommended that I take this trip. However, I had never been to America or taken a trip by myself, before I went to Space Camp in Alabama. I was scared and worried, but, in the end, the great experiences at Space Camp had a significant effect on my ability to make American friends, my decision to study in the United States, and my career goals. First, it was really fun and interesting to talk with American students. After camp started, I talked with the Japanese friends I had met at the airport because I was too afraid to speak in a language I had studied for only three months. However, I wanted to make American friends because I thought it was senseless to come here if I only talked with Japanese friends. On the second day, we were divided into teams with three to five Americans on a team. I tried to use my poor English to make American friends, but it was really difficult. First, I could not even introduce myself without looking at my note book in which I had written a few sentences down. Second, the Americans had never had any Asian friends, so they were surprised when I bowed, and they asked me many questions. They tried to understand my English, which sometimes took a few minute, even to ask where the bathroom was. In fact, one of these friends still writes me a couple of times a year, and I send him Christmas cards. From this experience, I learned that despite different languages, we still can understand each other and be good friends.

After camp I realized how it is great to study in the United States and to know another culture. Then I went back to Japan and spent my next three years in a Japanese junior high school. However, I simply could not forget about Space Camp. When I was fourteen years old, I decided to go to America to study more about American culture and my own. I told my parents, and they both supported my decision. I discovered Cushing Academy in a catalog and came here for summer school in 1994 when I was fifteen years old. During the summer session, I made a lot of friends and enjoyed classes, trips and activities very much. After summer school, I visited some other schools, but in the end I decided on Cushing Academy. As the result of the great experiences I had at Space Camp, I became interested in studying international cultures. Since I have been at Cushing Academy, I have been looking to lessen the cultural differences here. I am president of the International Club, which is composed of all international students. I have organized many events such as an International Day which introduced many different cultures and civilizations. It was very successful because many people wanted to share their experiences and cultures; they helped me with the event. One day in the future, I would like to take my study of international cultures one step further by studying political, economic, and social aspects of different traditions. I hope everybody will live together and work for a peaceful and comfortable world.

"Do you want to go to Space Camp this summer?" This one little conversation between my mother and me changed my whole life. Space Camp gave me the opportunity to make American friends, to study in the United States, and to make a decision about my goals. As a result, I am very thankful to my parents, especially my mother, for suggesting it. Although it was only one week long, it affected me profoundly. It opened the way for me to learn new things in America. As my mother could not realize her dream when she was young, I will do my best to achieve it for both of us.

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