



Batsirai Mutize and Himi Mizutani traveled around the world to attend Morningside.

BY JAN DEHNER

CHOOSING AMERICA

Last fall, Morningside College enrolled 23 international students. Their home countries include Albania, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Taiwan, Yugoslavia, and Zimbabwe. Alumni often play a significant role in an international student's decision to study at Morningside—one student at a time.

Himi Mizutani, a sophomore, was keyed up. She had been busy planning a trip to Europe as a member of the Morningside College Choir. The May trip would be her first time traveling to the eastern European cities of Prague, Vienna, and Budapest.

"I'm so excited. I can't wait," said Mizutani, the daughter of Makota and Yasuko Mizutani of Chiba, Japan.

After the choir tour, she will visit friends in Spain and England before returning home to Japan to be with her family, whom she hasn't seen since last summer.

Mizutani came to the United States in 2002 as a foreign exchange student. She lived with host parents, **LaNan 1973** and **Peter Eldridge 1974**, in Paullina, Iowa, where she attended South O'Brien High School. The exchange experience was such an enriching one that, when it came time to decide what to do after graduation, Mizutani considered several options.

"I was going to return to Japan, but when my host parents and I were looking at colleges they suggested I look at Morningside," said Mizutani. After she made a campus visit with her parents and host mother, she decided Morningside had many of the things she was looking for in a college.

"Morningside has small classes and the professors really care about you," said Mizutani, whose easy smile and laugh are infectious. "That's huge. I feel very comfortable here. I know nearly everyone."

She said the key to becoming comfortable with college life, just as with living life abroad, is getting involved early on in a variety of activities and organizations.

Besides singing with the college choir, Mizutani plays violin with the Youth Symphony and takes private violin and voice lessons. She is very involved with the International Students Association (ISA) and serves as its activity coordinator. At the annual ISA banquet last year, Mizutani prepared traditional

Japanese dishes and sang a song in her native language. She said she enjoys sharing her culture with students from the United States and other foreign countries. At the same time, she recognizes the unique opportunity she has to mentor other students in similar circumstances.

“When other Japanese students come to me and want to speak Japanese, I try to encourage them to speak English,” said Mizutani. “It will help them adjust to life here and make things easier for them.”

She has been on the Dean’s Honor List and is a member of Alpha Lambda Delta, a society that encourages high academic achievement of students in their first year. She is a member of the Morningside chapter of Alpha Mu Gamma, a national honor society for students of foreign languages, literature, and culture. She is also a mentor for Project HOPE, a non-profit, scholarship-based program that pairs college students with students in grades six through 12 to provide advocacy, career exploration, and support.

The benefits of attending college in the United States are not lost on Mizutani. When she first came to Morningside, she planned to major in corporate communications or art. After taking part in several of the performance arts opportunities available at Morningside, she is considering a change to theatre or voice performance. She said she would not have had the same options if she were attending college in Japan.

“Here you have lots of choices. In Japan, you would need to attend a special school if you wanted to be involved in music or theatre, and the competition is very tough,” Mizutani said.

Once she graduates from Morningside, Mizutani plans to put her English skills to use back home in Japan.

“I want to do something that will allow me to provide a connection between Japan and other countries,” she said.

A DREAM PASSED DOWN FROM FATHER TO SON

It has been more than three years since **Batsirai “Batsi” Mutize**, a native of Harare, Zimbabwe, has been home.

Mutize, the son of Miriam and **Pachawo Den Mutize 1971**, will graduate in December with a degree in biology. But he won’t be returning to Africa any time soon. He plans to continue his education by enrolling in the physician’s assistant program at Des Moines University.

It will be a dream fulfilled not only for Mutize, but also for his father.

“My ambition was to do medicine, but I was not able to do this, due to financial constraints,” wrote his father in a recent e-mail. “I am hoping that Batsi can take up from where I left and study medicine. Morningside College transformed me, and I kept on wishing my sons could have the same upbringing I had at the college.”

Mutize’s father was one of several students to come to

Morningside from Rhodesia, now known as Zimbabwe, in the early 1960s on a scholarship from the United Methodist Church. After graduating with a degree in chemistry, his father returned to Zimbabwe to teach and later worked as a research and development chemist for Unilever before leaving to start a business as a development consultant. The elder Mutize has returned to campus to see Mutize’s brother, **Zivanai Mutize 2002**, graduate and again in 2004, to visit Mutize.

Following in his father and brother’s footsteps seemed a natural progression for Mutize. He came to the United States in December 2001 as a foreign exchange student and lived with Doug and Nancy Bailey in Webster City, Iowa. After attending Iowa Central Community College in Webster City for three semesters, he transferred to Morningside.

“I was always coming here,” said Mutize. “But when I made a campus visit, I was overwhelmed by how friendly and accommodating everyone was.”

Like his father before him, he is a member of the Morningside men’s soccer team and said joining the team was one of the best ways of meeting new people and developing friendships. Taking a cue from his namesake, Batsirai, which means “power to help” in Shona, the native language of Zimbabwe, Mutize is a student ambassador for the admissions office and a resident assistant (RA) in Dimmitt Hall, something he plans to continue next semester.

“Being an RA means having your door open 24-7 for anyone and everyone. It’s a lot harder than I thought it would be, but it’s really rewarding,” Mutize said.

Mutize is vice president of ISA, a member of the student alumni association, and recently joined Students in Free Enterprise. He is a member of Beta Beta Beta, the biology honor society, and has been on the Dean’s Honor List.

Mutize said that, culturally, life in the United States is not much different from his home in Zimbabwe, a country slightly larger than the state of Montana. English is the official language, and music and television shows are similar. But, just as it was for his father, his biggest adjustment was getting used to the Midwestern winters. Nevertheless, he seems to have adapted just fine.

“I went skiing in Wyoming over spring break,” he said. “I’ve never done that before, and it was great.”

The one thing Mutize finds frustrating is the difficulty in securing a part-time job while going to school. As an international student, he does not qualify for the federal student work-study program and getting an off-campus job or internship involves a significant amount of red tape. Despite that, Mutize has no regrets about coming to Morningside.

He said, “Here, it really does seem like family.”

For more information about Morningside’s international student programs, visit www.morningside.edu.