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Then: Reflection on the Importance of Furman as it was

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THE FURMAN FARM

supplies a number of seasonal ingredients, including rosemary, spinach, Swiss chard, collard greens, bell peppers, cilantro, mint, parsley, eggplant and jalapeño peppers.



Each week, local farmer and Furman Farm Manager Bruce Adams supplies

600 lbs
of hamburger.



Stephen Arnold '94

THEN

Reflection on the importance of Furman as it was

In the fall of 1992, I had the incredible opportunity to participate in Furman's foreign exchange program in Japan.

With little travel experience under my belt, I ventured out on my first trip to the other side of the world, knowing only that I would be living with a homestay family in the Kansai Prefecture and attending a local university for about five months.

The first few days in Japan almost seemed like I was living in a dream. The sights, sounds and even smells were so different from what I was accustomed to in my cozy hometown of Knoxville, Tennessee. In the first few weeks I recall commiserating with other Furman students on the exchange program, and we shared wild stories about individual experiences. For example, one student had to buy all his own dishes to use at his homestay. As one would expect, I felt quite a bit of anxiety and frustration at first. My homestay family spoke very little English, which was the main impetus to learn the language. Over time I learned to communicate better with the family, which alleviated some of the challenges. By the end of my time in Japan, we had deeper conversations that included touchy subjects like religion and even WWII.

Looking back, I realize that the foreign exchange program truly changed my DNA, and I am truly grateful. I learned a ton about myself while expanding my worldview. I came to understand better and respect a different culture. The foreign exchange program changed my life, impacting my future decisions, including attending graduate school at the Thunderbird School of Global Management at Arizona State University.

I have been asked, "From your experience, what is your best advice for those considering a foreign exchange program?" First, when you put yourself out there and take risks, you will always mature as a person. And more often than not, you are better off when you take risks and fail than if you had never taken that risk at all. Taking on new challenges will always include times of struggle when you question just about everything, but the effort is all worth it in the end. I have found that through this tension, we grow.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen Arnold '94 is the chief financial officer at Arkis BioSciences and manages his own business consulting practice.