

Wakata lifts off on mission to command the ISS

- 1) BAIKONUR, Kazakhstan -- Koichi Wakata, 50, was launched into space on Nov. 7 for perhaps the greatest mission of his career to date: command of the International Space Station (ISS) -- the first Japanese astronaut to hold the post.
- 2) However, though **on the verge of** such **enormous** honors and responsibilities, Wakata spent every last minute he could doing the job of husband and father, reserving warm words for each member of his family. It was Wakata being his usual self, which is to say **astronomically** kind and **caring**.
- 3) Wakata and two other ISS-bound astronauts woke at about 1:30 a.m. (4:30 a.m. Japan time) on Nov. 7 and, some five hours later, arrived at the Baikonur Cosmodrome to **don** their white Russian space suits. He then **bid fond farewells** to each member of his family from behind a glass wall -- a safety measure to make sure he doesn't carry any **infections** into space with him.
- 4) When his 48-year-old wife Stefanie told him she'd had trouble sleeping, he told her it would take a while to dock with the ISS, and that she should **rest up** in the **interim**. To his son Akio, he said, "Are you tired? Take lots of photos of the launch, OK?"
- 5) This is Wakata's fourth trip into space, but his first time to make the trip on a Russian Soyuz rocket. He told his brother, 47, to "take care of mom." His 80-year-old mother Takayo said she was "looking forward to seeing the launch on TV and in the newspapers," and told Koichi to "have a safe trip." "I'll see you later," he replied with a smile.
- 6) Before getting changed into his spacesuit, Wakata also **accompanied** the Sochi Olympic **torch**, carried by Russian **cosmonaut** Mikhail Tyurin, on a march from the astronauts' hotel with light music playing in the background. Then a smiling and waving Wakata boarded the bus to the launch site with his two **companions**.
- 7) In Russia, there are a series of little ceremonies and events that must, by **superstitious convention**, precede a **spaceflight**. One of those is that light music, like that which accompanied the three astronauts' walk from hotel to bus, must be played. What's more, the song has to be "The Grass Near My Home," a 30-year-old tune from Russia's Soviet era.
- 8) As he left the hotel, Wakata also did the traditional thing and signed his name on the door. According to 49-year-old fellow astronaut Satoshi Furukawa, who was there to see the **autographing**, Wakata was then **splashed** with so much **holy water** he left the room **dripping**. That got a laugh out of his family and everyone else standing nearby, and kept the mood light.
- 9) Another somewhat **odd** Baikonur tradition followed. About a kilometer from the **launch pad**, the bus carrying the three **spacefarers** stopped so that Wakata could **take a pee** by the side of the



road -- just as the first person in space Yuri Gagarin had done before his historic mission in 1961.

10) The day before the launch, Wakata spent some **quality time** with his family watching the Russian action-comedy, "White Sun of the Desert." Watching the film is yet another Baikonur tradition, and Wakata had in fact seen it once before during his time as a **reserve** astronaut. 【11/07/2013/2013/Mainichi Japan】

←Robot Astronaut Kirobo and Commander Koichi Wakata Conduct a Conversation Experiment in the International Space Station (December 19, 2013)

on the verge of~::~~の間際に enormous:膨大な astronomically:天文学的に、けた外れに caring:思いやりのある don:身に着ける bid farewell:別れを告げる fond:大好きである、優しい infection:感染、伝染病 rest up:十分休養する、休息して元気を回復する(米) the interim:合間 accompany:同行する torch:たいまつ cosmonaut:(通例ソ連の)宇宙飛行士 companions:仲間 superstitious:迷信的な、御幣担ぎの convention:しきたり、因習 precede:先行する spaceflight:宇宙飛行 autograph:自署する splash:(水などを)びしゃっとはねかける holy water:聖水 drip:(液体が)したたる、ポトポト落ちる odd:風変わりな launch pad:発射台 spacefarer:宇宙旅行者、宇宙飛行士 take a pee:おしっこをする quality time:充実した時間(quality は限定的に形容詞も)

☆Ice breaker for active discussion☆

1. What is the significance of this flight for Koichi Wakata? How do you feel about it?
2. If you were in Mr. Wakata's situation, what would be your message to your family?
3. How can you make your duties as a good family member?
4. What are some traditions Mr. Wakata followed before boarding the Soyuz racket?
5. Please give some examples of superstitions in your country. Do you follow them?
6. What does the Olympic torch represent?
7. Make sentences using the following words : on the verge, caring, accompany, convention, precede, odd and quality time.

NEWS de TALK by PHILOS

埼玉県出身の若田光一さんは、九州大学大学院を修了後、日本航空に入社。旧・NASDAによりMS=ミッションスペシャリスト(スペースシャトル自体の運用を行う)候補に選出されました。スペースシャトル就役当初NASAは、日本人宇宙飛行士は日本の搭載機材のみを操作するペイロードスペシャリスト(PS)に限定されていましたが、外国人にMSの門戸を開放された後、ロボットアームの繊細な操作技術を修得した若田氏は、日本人初のMSとなり、これまでに米NASAのスペースシャトルによる3回のミッションに参加しました。2009年には4か月半に及ぶISS長期滞在中に、日本の有人宇宙施設「きぼう」の取り付けに成功。宇宙4度目となる今回のミッションでは日本人初のコマンダー(司令官)としての活躍に期待が寄せられます。ちなみに九州大学在学中には、鳥人間コンテストに出場され、その当時ドイツ人留学生だった現夫人との出会いがありました。