

## **TRF – Hilton Head Memories**

by Joseph M. Giachino

I read the Hilton Head notice announcing the awards in honor of Denice Denton, Wen Ko and Mark Shannon and it made me realize how rapidly time has passed. In my judgment the honors are well deserved and long overdue. I knew Wen and Denice very well and only knew of Mark by reputation. A sobering thought for me is that Mark was born the year I entered college.

This notice made me realize that most of the people now attending the Hilton Head Workshop have little knowledge how or why the workshop came about. So here is my take on the three why's of the workshop. Why a workshop? Why Hilton Head? Why TRF? These are the recollections of a very senior citizen.

### **WHY A WORKSHOP**

A conference called TRANSDUCERS was established in the 1970s. This conference was the place to present work concerning solid-state sensors, and later, actuators. The idea was that the conference should be held every two years in a different geographic area (Europe, Asia, Americas). This meant that the Americas would only host this meeting every six years. While at that time the field was small, a meeting every six years seemed inadequate to meet the community's needs in the Americas. Steve Senturia attempted to get a Gordon Conference on Microsensors to fill the void, but the application was turned down. That news was met with a determination to "do it ourselves."

Ken Wise initiated a meeting to address the best way to fill this void. To my recollection, the big meeting to discuss what to do was held in Michigan and the people present were:

Ken Wise – University of Michigan  
Wen Ko – Case Western Reserve University  
Dave Eddy – General Motors  
Ben Hocker – Honeywell  
Tom Poteat – Bell Labs  
Steve Senturia – Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Joe Giachino – Ford

I am sure I left some out so check with Ken and Ben. I know Scott Chang—General Motors was supporting the Transaction printing.

The result reached at this meeting was that there should be a North America meeting every two years, in the even years when there was no Americas TRANSDUCERS meeting.

The format of the meeting was fashioned after the Gordon Conferences. There is a limit on the attendees, and in theory participants are invited to attend. The workshop concept led the group to limit attendees to persons based in North and South America. The format was to have only one session, with all in attendance, each day—rather than parallel sessions. Lunches that would allow people to talk and exchange ideas were included in the program. There was a free afternoon to allow participants time to explore.

The meeting also included a "rump" session, where refreshments were served and a very free flow of comments was encouraged. Several rump session comments have stuck in my memory

over the years: “Single crystal bigots” and “I agree with Professor Senturia.” I do not know whether any of our current Hilton Head Workshop attendees have any idea as to what these quotes refer!

## **WHY HILTON HEAD**

The group decided the workshop would work best in a resort-type location with a casual, laid-back atmosphere to encourage people to informally interact. There were many suggestions for the venue including Mackinac Island, Mich., and Sandusky, Ohio.

Tom Poteat suggested Hilton Head, S.C. None of the other attendees knew of Hilton Head. Tom had grown up in the area and filled us in on the history and status. Hilton Head is a barrier island and in the early days was a place locals took their pigs to spend the winter. The pigs could forage for food, and they could not leave the island. I do not know how much of that is fact and how much is folklore. In the 1960s, developers began turning the island into an upscale resort community. The group was concerned about how accessible the island was to people coming from around the country. Tom let us know that the island was easily reached from Savannah and that there was even a small airport on the island, with shuttle service, if one did not want to drive.

What made the group decide on Hilton Head? Note that members of the group all had been previously involved in conference management and understood the effort involved in the tasks required for a successful meeting. So, when Tom said “If you select Hilton Head, I will be the local arrangements chair,” the group selected Hilton Head. After the first workshop, the suggestion was made that, like many IEEE meetings, the location should alternate between east coast and west coast. The suggestion was made that the meeting be held in Monterey, California. The group agreed that was a good location and the question was asked, “Who would like to be local arrangements chair for Monterey”? As there were no volunteers, thus was born the Hilton Head Workshop.

## **WHY TRF**

The original plan was to have the IEEE Electron Device Society (EDS) sponsor the workshop, and the first two workshops indeed were sponsored by EDS. Note that this workshop was valuable to EDS because the profit from the year’s first workshop made EDS conferences profitable for that year.

The workshop committee had contacted the European and Asian groups concerning limiting attendance to the Americas. No group objected; in fact, the Europeans started EUORSENSORS based on the model of limiting attendance to Europeans. The EDS professional staff had no objection as all parties were in concert. However, an EDS member in a position of authority did object. This member was adamant that IEEE meetings had to be open to any and all IEEE members. It was further stated that if the workshop did not abide by these rules, there would be no IEEE support.

The workshop committee wanted to continue the successful workshop formula. As this could not be done under the auspicious of the IEEE, the Transducer Research Foundation (TRF) became the sponsor.

Wen Ko had, prior to the IEEE sponsorship of the first workshop, established TRF as an Ohio nonprofit. This was done as the model for this type of workshop was new and the committee

was not certain that EDS would approve of the concept. The committee wanted IEEE financial and technical (archiving, administrative) support to better serve the sensor community. When IEEE did not support our efforts, the TRF Board went out on its own.

Before we hired Katharine Cline's firm (Preferred Meeting Management, Inc.) in 1999, we ran the workshop by ourselves. This included a website, printing the proceedings, administration and all the mundane items that need to be done. Here are some examples that come to mind:

The TRF Board agreed that if there was any shortfall in revenue, the Board as individuals would make up the difference. To the relief of all, this has never been necessary.

The proceedings from the early meetings were printed by General Motors and delivered to Hilton Head by Dave Eddy. The one exception is when Dave was injured in an accident, and he had Mike Putty deliver the proceedings.

Tom Poteat negotiated with the hotel and had one keg of beer donated to the rump session. We worked with the hotel to allow us to buy our own wine, and it was served at the banquet and rump session. The hotel only charged a corkage fee, which reduced the expense.

We sold extra proceedings for cash—no credit cards or digital wallets, just plain money. To reduce the risk of having loose cash around, the monies were used to buy the wine.

### **Creating a Community**

From the outset, the Workshop was devoted to creating a community of co-workers, including students. The founders take considerable pride in how that original intent has matured to the point where presentations by students, especially at our poster session, are many of the highlights of our program. As a "networking" event, the Hilton Head Workshop cannot be beat. It is the best!