



# International Federation for the Promotion of Mechanism and Machine Science

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## **IFTOMM 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration 30 September 2009 Guanajuato, Mexico Dr Joe Rooney, Treasurer**

I have been the Treasurer of IFTOMM now for almost six years and during that time I have been proud to be associated with such a prestigious organisation. It is particularly a special honour to be serving as Treasurer during the 40<sup>th</sup> year of IFTOMM's existence. But prior to my becoming Treasurer I had been associated with IFTOMM almost from the start. So, let me briefly relate to you some of my memories, coincidences and impressions of IFTOMM from those years.

I first became aware of IFTOMM in 1969, the year of its formal foundation. I was about to start the final year of my Mathematics B.Sc at the University of Sussex in the UK, and I visited Joe Duffy at Liverpool to make arrangements to work with him as a PhD student on Spatial Mechanisms. During our discussion, he began to tell me about IFTOMM and I asked him "who is Tom?". [There is an English phrase "...if any Tom, Dick or Harry...", and I had misheard what he was saying.] Anyway, of course he explained that IFTOMM was an acronym, and he then told me that the Federation had recently been established and had held a formal World Congress meeting in Zakopane in Poland. I was intrigued and surprised because I had just returned from a driving holiday in Poland, having visited Zakopane ten days before the IFTOMM Foundation Document was signed, in September 1969. This was the first of several coincidences.

I probably forgot about IFTOMM while I obtained my Bachelor's degree and started on my Doctorate. Then about a year into my doctoral studies I took another holiday by car, this time driving from the UK to Athens in Greece. En route I travelled through what was then Yugoslavia and stopped overnight in Dubrovnik. This was in August 1971. When I eventually returned to my studies I discovered that IFTOMM had been following me around again and had held its 3<sup>rd</sup> World Congress in Kupari, Dubrovnik, in September 1971, just after my visit. I still didn't fully understand IFTOMM and was briefly puzzled wondering whether "3<sup>rd</sup> World Congress" meant "Third-world Congress", but anyway, this was the second coincidence.

Subsequently, I obtained my PhD and took up a Post-Doctoral post at the University of Florida. By now I was much more aware of IFTOMM and its mission and ethos, and on my return to the UK I decided to submit two papers to the next IFTOMM conference. This turned out to be the 4<sup>th</sup> World Congress and again I found that IFTOMM seemed to be following me around – I had just returned to the UK and the World Congress was being held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This was the third coincidence.

### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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I eventually joined the Open University and was not too surprised to learn that the OU was founded on 23 July 1969 – the same year as IFToMM's formal foundation. This was the fourth coincidence.

Well, I won't bore you with any more anecdotes, except to say that I have now accepted my fate – I can't escape IFToMM!

There have now been twelve IFToMM World Congresses to date and I have attended seven of them. Apart from the first three (Varna, Zakopane and Kupari), I have only missed the 8<sup>th</sup> (Prague) and the 9<sup>th</sup> (Milan). Some slightly amusing recollections include:

- Bernie Roth and I almost got arrested in Newcastle (1975) for complaining about the wrong food and poor service in a local restaurant;
- On returning from New Delhi (1983), the plane almost became a Helmholtz resonator when Jorge Angeles fell asleep;
- On the way to Sevilla (1987), my luggage was lost for several days – it had gone via Dubrovnik! (another coincidence?);
- I had to endure the attacks of surprisingly very aggressive mosquitoes in Oulu (1999) especially when swimming in a cold lake after a sauna on the post congress tour;
- As Treasurer in Tianjin (2004), I was furtively given (at a previously arranged private meeting place) a large sum in cash, by a representative (who seemed to be accompanied by a body-guard) from an MO in arrears – it felt like I was in a James Bond scene;

IFToMM is a non-profit making organisation and it is often difficult to balance the income from MO subscriptions with the outgoings for our various activities and support programmes. With another two years to go as Treasurer I hope I will be able to continue to keep IFToMM on a stable foundation financially, despite the current world financial recession.

When I look back over the forty years since IFToMM's formal foundation, I see that there have now been six IFToMM Treasurers, including myself. At the end of my term in 2011 the post will have been based in the UK for 28 years. Perhaps it is now time for a change.

I wish IFToMM and my successors every success over the next forty years.

Joe

Dr J Rooney  
[IFToMM Treasurer 2004 - 2011]

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