Tourin’ Turin

STLE participated in the fifth WTC—along with nearly 40 other tribology societies.

FROM THE MEETING VENUE to the technical sessions to the host city of Turin, Italy, the fifth World Tribology Congress was a great event. For me, both as an industry professional and representing STLE as president, it was a wonderful experience.

Situated in northwest Italy, Turin has a population of about 1.7 million in the city itself and nearly 2.2 million in the greater metropolitan area. The city draws its name from the Taurani, an ancient race of Indo-Europeans who occupied the land more than 2,000 years ago.

Some observers call Turin the most Italian city in France or the most French city in Italy. Regardless, Turin is a beautiful and scenic area known for its art galleries, churches, palaces, opera houses, museums, gardens and, of course, the famous Shroud of Turin. The architecture and design ideas come from the Baroque era and the Age of Enlightenment, or so I am told.

Turin also is the home of automobile manufacturers Fiat, Lancia and Alfa Romeo. The food was wonderful, and even the taxi drivers are friendly, which is remarkable considering my Italian vocabulary consists of one—arrivederci. I have never seen so many small Fiat cars or scooters in my entire life, all driven with reckless enthusiasm.

This year’s WTC was organized by the Italian Tribology Association in cooperation with Polytechnics of Torino and the University of Pisa. Turin was chosen as the site after meetings in London (1997), Vienna (2001), Washington, D.C., (2005) and Kyoto, Japan (2009). STLE, by the way, was the planning organization for the Washington event.

The conference took place in the indoor hockey stadium used for the 2006 Winter Olympics. It is a futuristic, rectangular building covered with stainless steel and glass.

The conference hosted 1,287 attendees representing 67 countries. About 900 presentations and 200 posters were presented within 14 technical tracks. There were six plenary talks and lectures ranging from space tribology to the CERN super-collider.

Participants were able to interact with others doing research in their technical areas. With 67 countries involved, this meeting collected research on a global scale. There were tribology societies from nearly 40 countries, which is why it was important for STLE to have a presence. In addition to me, STLE was represented by our treasurer, Ali Erdemir, our director of professional development, Bob Gresham, and our executive director, Ed Salek. Ali, who works for Argonne National Laboratory, also had the honor of presenting technical talks at the WTC.

I visited an Italian version of our Whole Foods market and was amazed at the food selections. How many different kinds of olive oil are there? I visited the Automobile Museum and saw a well-thought-out museum showing the evolution of the car from both the Italian and international viewpoints. I don’t know why they paint Ferraris red, but they sure look great.

STLE also participated in the International Tribology Council (ITC) meeting chaired by Dr. H. Peter Jost. Remember that Dr. Jost is the man who coined the word “tribology” way back in 1966. Probably 30 other countries also attended the ITC meeting with the main purpose of deciding upon the next meeting location. Two presentations were given, and when the votes were counted Beijing, China, was awarded the 2017 WTC. I’m sure that event will live up to the excitement and technical excellence of its five predecessors.

Arrivederci.