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The Story of the NAFIP-1 Poster

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The idea of forming a professional society dedicated to the advancement of Fuzzy Sets and Systems was hatched by Enrique Ruspini, Madan Gupta and myself (Jim Bezdek) on a plane trip returning to the USA from Acapulco, Mexico in December, 1980. We had all given talks about fuzzy models at the *International Congress for Systems and Cybernetics*, and the lure of having our own forum for technical interchange of ideas in the field was a hypnotic one.

Subsequently, the *North American Fuzzy Information Processing* (NAFIP) group was established, with King Sun Fu as its founding president in 1981. The founding Board of Directors consisted of Jim Bezdek, Enrique Ruspini, Piero Bonissone, Richard Tong, Lotfi Zadeh, K. S. Fu, and Ron Yager. The Board did not meet physically during our first year of operation, but we did conduct a lot of business by surface mail. We initially called this organization a group. We had the idea that it should be called a society, but we did not decide to add the "S," for "Society," until 1985. This was also the year that Enrique Ruspini filed the documentation for us to become a tax-exempt California corporation.



Front row: Left to Right: Paul Wang, Abe Mamdani, Tanya Bezdek, King-Sun Fu, Jim Yao, Lorenza Saitta. **Middle**: Janet Esfathiou, Richard Tong, Ronald Yager. **Back Row**: Marc Roubens, Philippe Smets, Piero Bonissone, Jim Bezdek, Enrique Ruspini, Elie Sanchez.

I volunteered to organize the first conference under the banner of the

NAFIP group, to be held in May, 1982 in Logan, Utah. Subsequently, the conference, named NAFIP-1, was held on the campus of *Utah State University* (USU) in Logan, where I was an associate professor in the Mathematics Department. The first physical meeting of the board of directors was held at my house in Richmond, Utah. The photograph of that event was taken on the front porch of my house.

There were no papers submitted or published for this meeting; rather, it was a meeting of talks, which at that time was the main point of almost all professional conferences. I made up a book of abstracts that summarized the talks (my recollection is that there were 42 of them, ±5 or so). The talks were presented in classrooms at USU, mostly on blackboards with white chalk. I recall that Ron Yager, sitting in the front row at one of these talks, lit up a big cigar and happily puffed away during the talk. Oh, how times have changed!

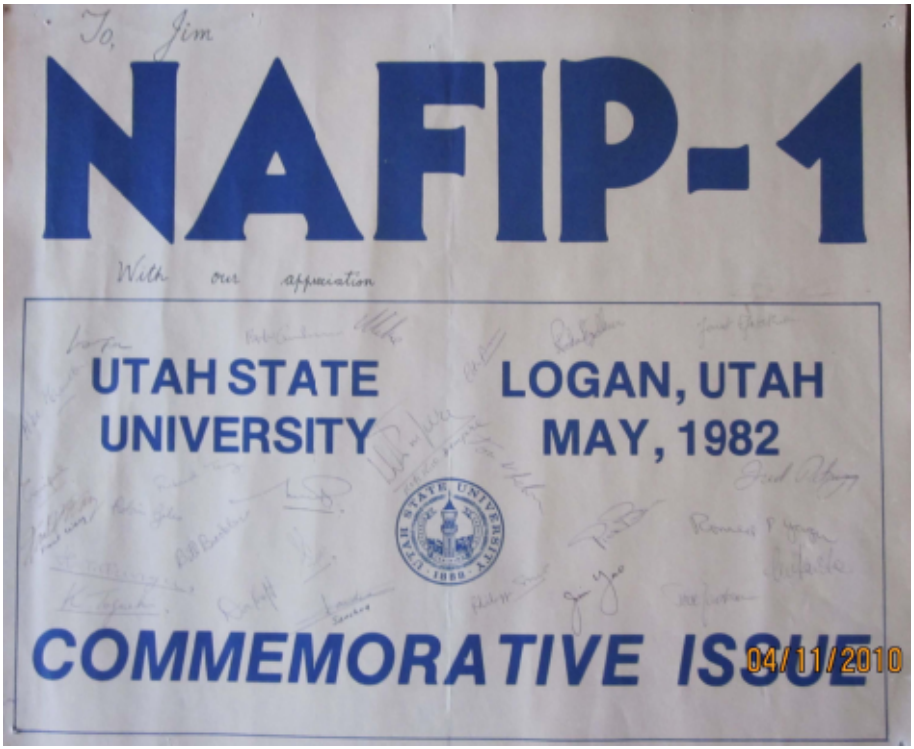
I had the idea that this was an historic occasion, it being the first conference of the first professional organization dedicated to fuzzy sets and systems, so I made up a poster (on my first Apple Macintosh, with a huge 64kb of RAM !) for the meeting bearing the term "commemorative issue" at the bottom. I then had a print shop in Logan run off 75 copies of the poster, and each participant was given one at registration. I ended up with one clean unused copy of that poster, along with the signature version discussed below.

The fashion of the day was to have a glorious banquet, so of course we had one at the end of the meeting. Most of us (not quite all of us) drove up highway 89 towards Salt Lake City to a restaurant (I cannot recall its name) that was situated all by itself, nestled in the range of mountains the locals called the "Wellsvilles."

I had invited Brian Gaines to be our banquet speaker, but he had still not appeared when we left for the restaurant, so my anxiety about his participation in this event was palpable. Just as we were being served dessert, Brian arrived, having driven a rental car directly from the Salt Lake City airport to the restaurant. Brian blew into the room quite breathlessly, looking as disheveled as is possible for a distinguished practitioner of the fuzzy arts, gulped down a huge drink, went to the head of the room, and proceeded to give one of the funniest and best banquet talks you will ever hear. Here is Brian's account of that talk, sent to me via email on July 2, 2017:

> *Yes, I gave both the Logan and Kauai banquet speeches. How I became a banquet speaker is a mystery, particularly to me. The Logan one is very*

memorable. A few days prior to it I had been in Japan consulting with Toppan Printing and was scheduled to fly from Tokyo to Logan to arrive the day before I was due to speak. However the President of Toppan had to give a talk in English and asked me to stay an extra day and help him get it right. I did but then arrived at SLC the afternoon of the banquet, found I had missed the flight to Logan, hired a car and arrived just as dinner ended and I was due to speak. I never prepared such speeches—they were always extemporary, and of what I said I have no recollection. I had meetings in San Francisco the next day and then flew back to London for another meeting. When I arrived back at our apartment in the Barbican I felt fine and was chatting to Mildred when I just fell over.



While Brian was talking, unknown to me, the people at the banquet were quietly circulating this poster, which many of them signed (30 signatures I think), and King Sun Fu presented it to me at the end of the evening. It's a miracle that it survived even that night, because I was pretty well into my cups, and didn't remember much about that evening the next day. But it did survive, and I have carried it around with me ever since. The

copy of the poster shown here was scanned on April 11, 2010.

Some of the signatures are quite faded because of the ink used, some I don't recognize, some I can't read, and I am not sure that restoration is possible. Here is a list of the signatures that I can read, beginning in the upper left corner with King Sun Fu, and (roughly) traversing the poster clockwise and inwards.

K. S. Fu
Bob Gunderson

Colin Brown
Brian Gaines
Janet Esfathiou
Fred Petry
Ron Yager

Tove Jacobsen
Jim Yao
Piero Bonissone
Philippe Smets
Elie Sanchez
Don Kraft

Bill Buckles
Robin Giles
Paul Wang
Richard Tong
Lotfi Zadeh
Abe Mamdani
Kofi Dompere
Tom Whalen

I can name a few other attendees, whose signatures may or may not be on this poster: Mike Windham, LaDawn Haws. Lorenza Saitta, Rajesh Dave, Marc Roubens, Enrique Ruspini, Abe Kandel.

And so, the story of the NAFIP-1 poster is told.