

2008 American Control Conference Report
By Chang-Hee Won
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When I boarded the plane for Seattle, the temperature in Philadelphia was over 100 degrees. When I landed in Seattle, the temperature was about 50 degrees! Cool, dry weather was my first impression of the city. The hotel was cylindrical shape with views around the city and the bay. As usual, the ACC began with the opening reception on Tuesday, June 10th at the Westin hotel. The next day the plenary lecture was by Lino Guzzella of ETH, Zurich. He talked about the past, present, and future automotive systems. He claimed that lots of work has been done by the control engineers in automotive systems and there are much more work to be done in that area. It was interesting because there were also a number of automotive sessions throughout the ACC and the sessions were usually packed. The Thursday plenary talk was by Mandyam Srinivasan of Queensland University. He talked about visual guidance of bees and how this can be applied to UAVs. This was a very interesting talk. He talked about how bees use optical flow to communicate the location of the food. There is still a lot more to be learned about how these insects navigate but the experiments that he performed show how they use a visually-driven "odometer". The Friday's plenary talk was by Daniel Liberzon of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He talked about robustified (The speaker joked about whether robustified is a word. Is it?) nonlinear system theory. This talk was very mathematical and it had a little too many equations for my taste. Nevertheless plenary talks were very good and it had a good mix of theory and applications. I mostly attended stochastic control, adaptive control, and satellite control sessions. About ten percent of the conference was interactive sessions. There were some good papers but overall interactive sessions were disappointing because of the quality of the presentation and lack of interests from both the presenter and the participants. This ACC seems to have a number of special sessions. Some were industry-sponsored (GE, Honeywell, United Technologies, Mathworks, Bosch, National Instruments) and some were government agency-sponsored (DoD, NSF, NASA). There were also sessions on emerging topics such as adaptive neurocontrol, glucose control technology, impact of offshoring on the US Economy, and systems biology. I attended neurocontrol session and NASA/DoD session; they were both very interesting. Overall, there were a number of special sessions such as tutorials and special topics; and they were quite informative. More and more I seem to enjoy the special sessions. The 2008 ACC ended with a reception at the Space Needle.



Space Needle in Seattle was the location of the farewell reception. Great view with good drinks is a good way to say goodbye.