

Conferences

International Meteor Conference 2008

Shy Halatzi ¹

Received 2008 November 3

*From every country
stars get together
to talk joyfully.*
Haiku, by Nagatoshi Nogami.

We arrived at the Hotel Šachtická, near Banská Bystrica on Thursday afternoon. The lobby was busy with participants arriving and there was a sense of holiday in the air. After exchanging greetings with Daniel Očenáš and Stanislav Kaniansky from the local organizing committee, we quickly checked in to our room. A reminder of the internationality of the IMO was given when we were told that Shlomi Eini and myself were thought to be women, because of our non-European names, and were assigned so in the rooms until shortly before the IMC (thanks to Marc Gyssens who found the mistake and our lost manhood). Of course this was a very funny event which was sorted out quickly and gave some good joking-material for the rest of the IMC ('so this is why they were so nice when emailing with me...').

The hotel and its surroundings were beautiful, good choice by the LOC, in my opinion. A short walk up the hill also gave us a panoramic view of the Banská Bystrica region, including the observatory which was seen small in the distance. The way down was, as we found out, a bit more tiring. But it was a worthwhile hike in a good time, since the following days were very busy, as you will soon read. Next the welcoming dinner was in good atmosphere, a great time to meet old friends, as well as making new ones, of course.

Right after dinner, started the first session – an open meeting about radio meteor observing. As someone who never had dealt with radio astronomy, it was very interesting to hear about this field of work. The group discussed challenges and problems which radio observers and analyzers face nowadays, and suggested steps that will make it possible to move things forward. Afterwards tiredness seemed to overcome most of us and we slept well before the next main lecture day.

*Now let's talk each other
on the Tatra of autumn air.*
Haiku, by Nagatoshi Nogami.

In the next morning, the lecture sessions began, with many interesting topics following one another. The Dynamics of Meteoroids session was interesting, including some nice graphical displays of meteoroid orbits. The Visual session included various talks focusing mainly on



Figure 1 – Valentin Grigore (Romania, left) discussing with Haiku author Nagatoshi Nogami (Japan, right). Photo courtesy of Rainer Arlt.

observer perception and accuracy, as well as a lecture from Rainer Arlt about the recently very active Orionids. In the Video Observing session, Sirko Molau had a long presentation about the growth and geographical expansion of meteor video observations in the past year as well as results of this work. It seems like video observing is a promising field, although it still has to make a long way before making visual observers obsolete. The next morning began with three talks about fireball networks in Croatia, Poland and the Czech Republic / Slovakia, including impressive images and results of bright fireballs which may have dropped meteorites in Central Europe. The Meteor Analysis session included the presentation of highly practical Virtual Meteors Observatory by Geert Barentsen and the similar Virtual Fireball Observatory by Nastassia Smeets. The last session was on various topics, including a very interesting talk about the recent Carnacas meteorite impact by Cis Verbeeck. The paper is short and many more great lectures were given which I didn't mention. But I can say that,

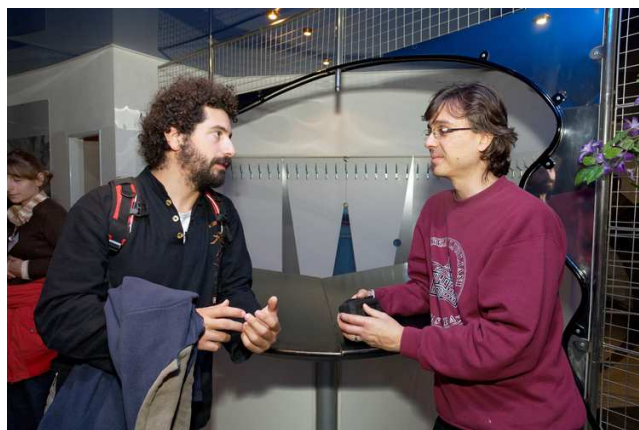


Figure 2 – Grigoris Maravelias (Greece, left) having discussion with Antonio Martinez Picar (Venezuela, right) during the visit of Maximilian Hell Observatory and Planetarium in Žiar nad Hronom. Photo courtesy of Rainer Arlt.

¹1st Hadrar St. Kiryat Ono 55600 Israel.
Email: shyhalatzi@gmail.com



Figure 3 – A happy IMC crowd in front of the Šachtička hotel. Photo courtesy of Javor Kac.

being in an IMC for the first time, I had much to learn from these sessions, much more than by from reading articles and internet material, or even books. I hope than in conjunction with the beginning of my university studies I could make a small contribution myself to the meteor talks next year.

*On this journey
I feel your warm
LASKA's hospitality^a
Haiku, by Nagatoshi Nogami.*

But of course IMC was not 100% lectures. We also had some great social gatherings on Friday evening with the guitar or in the bar until late hours (beer helps astronomers make international cooperation and PhD lookouts).

Next there was the excursion. First we visited a Slovak gold and silver mine. All IMC participants, young and old, short or tall, were dressed in peculiar miner clothes and were given big flashlights to make our way underground. No silver or gold were found on this trip, but it was still a joy. From there we continued to visit the Maximilian Hell Observatory and Planetarium in Ziar nad Hronom. There we ate many apples and had a planetarium tour of the southern sky, in English. Surreal, considering that we were near latitude 50 and the sky was completely grey from the beginning to end of the IMC. It was a pity that (probably?) for that reason we also did not visit the observatory dome. The AstroShow was the highlight of social activities, in my opinion, an unforgettable experience (at least until IMC 2009 I suppose). I enjoyed it as a performer, together with Shlomi Eini, presenting our meteor jokes, as well as an audience, listening to various songs, Haikus or other performances. The highlight of the show for me was Andrei's performance of a black hole eating all prominent meteor showers (you had to be there to understand...this is a good reason not to miss the IMC). Many thanks and greetings to Valentine Grigore and Andrei Dorian Gheorghe for orchestrating this magnificent evening, a fantastic combination of art, science and comedy.

And a bit about this IMC in historical context. As veteran IMO founder Paul Roggermans told me, several important anniversaries occurred in 2008: 35 years

of WGN, 30 years of the IMC and 20 years to the creation of the IMO. Formally, little attention was dedicated to these anniversaries in the conference. It seems as though the IMO and IMC are so well established that they are perceived today like a natural thing happening. As a first-timer in the IMC, I clearly say that they are not. Coming to IMC added greatly to my knowledge base and interaction/cooperation with other meteor enthusiasts. I can now fully understand the necessity of an international organization which unites the meteors community to improve our observational and research work. It also has many social benefits.

So, to conclude...congratulations to our meteors community for all the anniversaries mentioned in the previous paragraph, as well as the very successful IMC that took place in September. I recommend anyone to come to the next conference... See you in IMC 2009!

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Nagatoshi Nogami, IMO member from Japan and IMC2008 participant, who let me use his Haiku(s) in the article.



Figure 4 – Participants enjoying the evening discussions. From left: Luc Bastiens, Nagatoshi Nogami, Urška Pajer, Antonio Martinez Picar, Nastassia Smeets, Roland Winkler and Lucie Maquet. Photo courtesy of Casper ter Kuile.

^a(LASKA = love in Slovak)