

Passion is in the Air—Before, During and After ICCF Meetings

Scott Chubb

In less than a week, I will be leaving for the thirteenth International Conference on Cold Fusion (ICCF13), which will take place in a resort on the Black Sea, in the town of Sochi (Russia). Every ICCF conference I have ever attended has been exciting and interesting. New, novel results—some of them quite wrong, some of them quite right—have been presented at each of these conferences. I am sure this will be true at ICCF13.

As I am preparing for ICCF13, I am feeling a degree of passion that I have sensed just prior to every ICCF meeting. The reason is that right now, I have been concentrating, as I always do, on writing my ICCF Proceedings paper and preparing my talk. In addition, in making arrangements for traveling to such a distant country, I have felt both frustration and excitement. In thinking about this, I began to think about earlier ICCF meetings and about the extraordinary events that took place before, during, and after one particular ICCF meeting, ICCF8. Some of these events were so bizarre that, in looking back at them, I have often wondered how some of these events—which really seemed to be the result of coincidences—will be remembered, and if they will be remembered. Possibly by my writing about them, by helping to record some of the history of the Cold Fusion saga, I will help to make these events remembered.

The events began three weeks before ICCF8, in April 2000, after I received an e-mail inviting me to a dinner, sponsored by the American Geophysical Society (AGU) at their spring meeting, to be recognized for being an outstanding reviewer during 1999, for the AGU's *Journal of Geophysical Research: Oceans*. Slightly less than three weeks after receiving the invitation (but before the actual event), on the Saturday that I left for Lerici, Italy (where ICCF8 was scheduled to take place), I participated as a delegate to the Democratic Party caucus for our local congressional district, where I had the rare opportunity of seeing a United States Senator (Chuck Raab) deliver a speech, in person. But I wasn't able to meet Senator Raab in person because I had to leave this event, two hours early, to go to my son's 10th birthday party. I really could not spend much time celebrating this event because I arrived 45 minutes late, and I had to leave an hour early (right after we sang "Happy Birthday" to my son, Scott Jr.) to go to Dulles airport to catch my flight to Pisa (the location of the closest airport to Lerici). Five days later, I left ICCF8 a day early to go to my 25th college reunion, where I just missed attending the most important event (our class dinner) because of delays related to heavy traffic. The following Monday (Memorial Day), things calmed down a little. But the next day, they heated up again.

First, I went to the Renaissance Hotel for the recognition dinner, arriving an hour early, and for the first time since I participated in something important (beginning with the Democratic caucus) during the previous 11 days, I had some leisure time, before a new, seemingly important event. I decided I would go to the AGU meeting place (across the street from the hotel, in the Washington Convention Center) to see if anything interesting was going on. As I walked in, I saw an announcement. It said, "Newt Gringrich to speak about: 'Science in the 21st Century.'" The announcement also gave the time and location

of his talk. It had just started. And although I hadn't registered for the meeting, I decided I would try to hear him speak.

The auditorium where he was speaking was packed. But for some reason that I did not understand (until later), the first three rows of seats were empty. So, I walked up and sat down, in the third row, immediately in front of him. When he concluded his talk, the moderator stood up and said, "Dr. Gingrich has kindly agreed to take questions after we thank him for presenting his talk." After the audience applauded, I raised my hand, and since I was directly in front of him, he called on me first.

In typical, no-holds-barred fashion, I said, "Normally, I would not talk about this, but since you said that scientists should speak out about important issues at public gatherings, I want to point out that last week, I gave an invited talk and chaired a session at the eighth international conference on Cold Fusion. This conference dealt with a subject that has become so controversial that despite the fact the scientific phenomenon is quite real, effectively, work in this area has been banned from this country and driven overseas. I do have an additional question. Because there is a definite need to inspire young people to be involved in science, what, in your opinion, can organizations like the AGU do to foster greater interest by young people in science."

Newt Gingrich responded, "Boy, You have covered a lot of ground, here. I don't know if Cold Fusion is real or if Cold Fusion is not real. But I do know that when important events occur in science, very often, in fact most of the time, they inspire passion: Scientists can be thought to be very right about something and turn out to be very wrong; Scientists can also be thought to be very wrong about something and turn out to be very right."

As I got up to go to the AGU dinner, I noticed a sign in the seat next to me that said "Press" (which is the reason that no one was sitting in the first three rows). Ironically, I actually was to later become a member of the press (as a technical editor for *Infinite Energy*, after its editor and founders death in May 2004) without realizing it as the next series of events took place. This began the next day when I called Gene Mallove, at *Infinite Energy*, to tell him about what had happened. His immediate response was "did anyone record this?" I said I didn't think so.

The following evening when I got home from work, I listened to a phone message from my mother-in-law. She asked me to call her. When I did, she said, "Scott, I saw you on T.V.. When Ronnie [my father-in-law] was channel-surfing, he noticed an event that was being covered by CSPAN, in which Newt Gingrich was speaking to a bunch of scientists. When I came in and looked at what he was watching, I said, 'Look, that's Scott! He is right there, right of front of Newt Gingrich!' Ronnie said, 'Nah; that can't be Scott.' Then, you stood up and gave a speech."

At this point I checked the internet and found the event, pinned down the precise frames in the Real Player file where I spoke, and I told Gene about it. Of course, immediately

after Gene heard this, he told as many people as possible about the event and how to watch it.

Ten days passed. Then, an article appeared in a newsletter that covers events involving members of the Civil Service, titled, "Newt Gingrich, Agnostic about Cold Fusion." It began by saying, "While most journalists and scientists religiously avoid believing in Cold Fusion or talking about it, two weeks ago, at a meeting of the American Geophysical Union, Newt Gingrich demonstrated a remarkable degree of agnosticism and open-mindedness, when an employee from the Department of Defense confronted him about the subject."

These events were entirely unexpected and seemed to be the result of a series of coincidences. But who can really know if this is true. I am certain of one thing, however—there is passion in the air, as ICCF13 is about to take place. And I am confident something terrific will take place.