

Women in Control Newsletter

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1. Editor's Note:

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

I hope all of you are having a great Springtime, and preparing for a wonderful summer! Many of you will be at the American Control Conference, and I am sure there will be a get-together there.

The main part of this newsletter today is Bozenna's article. Please read it carefully, and send us your comments *etc.* ... please know that your feedback is extremely important to this group and also to IEEE CSS in general. When I think of how much progress we have made in about seven years of time, I am impressed. I still remember my first CDC ... I had the whole "Ladies' Room" to myself ... there were probably two her women at the conference. I did not know them, but in retrospect, I think they probably were Lena Valavani and Bozenna Pasik-Duncan. By contrast, these days our conferences are so much fun! Women's activities have increased a lot, and will continue to increase as we generate newer and better ideas for improving our professional society.

Please let me know if any of you will be at the Mediterranean Control Conference (Alghero, Italy). Bozenna and I will be there. I am also planning to visit Rome, Zagreb, Budapest, Prague and Vienna. If you live close to any of these places, please let me know if we could meet, even if for a very short time!

This is all for now. I think the next newsletter will not come out before mid-July. Have a great summer, everyone!

Fahmida Chowdhury fnchowdh@usl.edu

2. Bozenna's Article:

Dear Friends,

I have just come back from the Fourth SIAM Conference on Control and its Applications that took place in Jacksonville, Florida last week.

Suzanne Lenhart, chair of the Organizing Committee, (Congratulations to Suzanne and Belinda King for excellent work organizing the conference and to Ruth Curtain for excellent plenary talk) arranged a "get together" for women in control. 20 women were present. No agenda was scheduled for that meeting, but I shared my recent dilemma. Let me share it with you. As you know I am Vice President for Membership Activities of our Society this year, and one of my goals is to promote women. Those who read the article "Role of Women in CSS Continues to Grow" saw the statistics about women in CSS. I was able to identify 3 female Fellows and 9 female senior members out of 365 female members.

I wanted to improve this statistic. I was successful with identifying a truly outstanding woman for nomination for a Fellow. The paperwork is difficult to prepare and takes a lot of time, but I did it. I was successful with getting 8 references on time, but I was also careless. I didn't check a simple condition with my candidate. I didn't ask the question, "Have you been a member of our Society for the last five years?" I had assumed (wrongly as it turned out) that she had been a member for that length of time. Unfortunately, this is a necessary condition. There are some exceptions, but those apply to some "disadvantageous" regions. Needless to say, I was extremely disappointed. Let me share with you a response from my candidate. This is a very thoughtful response.

"Dear Bozena,

In responding to your question regarding my membership in IEEE the answer, regrettably, is that I have been a member only since 1997. First of all I want to apologize to you as the nominator, as well as to other people who were involved in the process, for your time, effort and the engagement. I regret very much that this issue was not brought up before. This would have spared valuable time and energy of several people (above all yourself). However, regrettably, I was unaware of the 5 years membership requirement. Otherwise I would have informed you ahead of time.

To explain why I was not an official member before (though, since 1981, I was actively involved in a variety of professional activities sponsored by IEEE CSS), I would say that the main reason was the fact that, as you know, IEEE is a largely male dominated organization. Being a member of several other professional organizations (AMS, SIAM, IFIP, *etc.*), having thus limited time and energy for additional involvements, I did not think at that time that my personal membership in IEEE CSS would provide significant benefits to the organization or an enhancement to my own professional career. In particular, as you know, in the past women were not represented or recognized by IEEE and, to my best knowledge, there were no activities targeted to women engineers, scientists.

The situation has changed drastically, at least in my eyes, when I have learned about new very positive and encouraging developments in the Society, whose aim is to include specifically women in all activities and to provide an appropriate forum and recognition for their scientific accomplishments. The best example is the fact that now women join the BOG appointments and other prestigious ranks including the Vice President

position. The newly formed Group "Women in Control" serves as a wonderful example on how to integrate women involvement and participation into the overall activities of the Society with mutual benefits to all parties involved.

Congratulations, Bozenna. I consider this a very important step forward and I see now in real terms that women membership in IEEE will be not only appreciated but it can bring new dimensions to the organization and open new professional opportunities to women scientists.

For this reason, when you contacted me in the Spring of 1997 with an invitation for a nomination to become a Senior Member, I have decided to put my energy and time in order to contribute, in a more significant way than ever, to this very positive endeavour.

I want to thank you very much for all this and again I apologize for taking your time and effort involved with my nomination for the Fellow grade.

With very best regards"

I have asked the IEEE and IEEE/CSS for getting a waiver in this case. The answer was that we may consider changing rules for exceptions in the future. My candidate has to wait until 2002. I hope someday that the rules will change to recognize women in our Society for their contributions and achievements without having to wait 5 years to be eligible for a Fellow after they have joined the Society. My "request" or "experienced woman's advice" to you is join the Society now. You never know when someone would like to recognize you highly ...

You can also find in the article, mentioned above, the address where to apply and the information of how and when to apply for senior membership. Many of you are fully qualified. If you need one more reference, I will be happy to be your reference and I will always find time for you.

Let me announce our next "get together." It will take place in Philadelphia at the 1998 ACC. As always, we shall have lunch together on Wednesday, June 24.

I would like to propose the following new program. Many of us travel around the world, especially during the summer months. Let us post, using our mailing list, information and schedules regarding our trips and make arrangements to meet at those specific destinations. For example, I will be in Osaka-Japan, China, Sardinia, Padova-Italy, Paris-France, *etc.* Fahmida will visit Zagreb, Budapest and Prague next month. If you are coming to the States and would be interested in visiting with some of us, let us know. We can start our own Exchange Program and help each other.

Let me know before the ACC in June which of you are planning to attend the CDC in Florida in December, and who would like to chair the session. I will nominate you at the ACC.

If you have any ideas about how we can help each other and how we, women in control, can help CSS to grow and be stronger, please share them with me. With your help, I can be an effective Vice President.

Finally, let me inform you that Cheryl Schrader, Chair of Women in Control, and Linda Bushnell, Chair of History, are on the ballot for IEEE Control Systems Society Board of Governors. Please join me in showing our support for both of them who are outstanding members of our Society. It is important that many of us be involved. It is a lot of work, but I believe that it can be very rewarding.

I will be more that happy and very grateful for your comments, remarks, suggestions , criticism and new ideas how to make things better , how to make our life easier, happier and more successful! Let us really get together. There are many of us now. We can make a change and help each other.

With my very best wishes to each of you and all of you,

Bozenna

P.S. See KU webpage <http://www.math.ukans.edu/mathaware.html> for information about our extremely successful and terrific Mathematics Awareness Week at the University of Kansas. 1500 students from local schools participated in our activities! I encourage you to join me in this kind of service for your community. Do you want to feel happy? I guarantee this is the most rewarding activity and the kids love it.

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