

KOREA RE-EXPLORES INTEREST IN “COLD FUSION”

An Interview with Dr. Sunwon Park

by Marianne Macy

At ICCF16 in India, a significant new presence was that of researchers from South Korea—Dr. Sunwon Park and Dr. Do Hyon Kim from the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) and Dr. Kew-Ho Lee from the Korea Research Institute of Chemical Technology (KRICT)—who were involved at the start of cold fusion research and are poised to play a significant new role. At the end of the conference, Dr. Park announced that South Korea would welcome hosting the next ICCF conference; the continental rotation of the conference series calls for a North American session, but if a chairperson does not volunteer then the meeting can be held elsewhere.

What follows is a brief interview with Dr. Sunwon Park, giving some insight into his group’s presence at ICCF16 and interest in the field.

Park: I can guarantee that participation of Korean researchers would expedite the practical application of cold fusion knowledge.

Macy: This week it was said your government had put forth money and interest in cold fusion research. Is that so?

Park: No, for now, just a small portion of money to investigate our initial work in the cold fusion technologies. My interest had dated back to the original announcement from Fleischmann and Pons a long time ago. I was disappointed when after one or two years of the initial excitement worldwide, interest disappeared. About two years ago, at the time of the twentieth anniversary of the Fleischmann and Pons announcement and the ACS meeting, there was a lot of news coverage related to a paper from SPAWAR about tracks that indicated a high-energy neutron generated in their experiment. Also I saw the “60 Minutes” story! [<http://www.cbsnews.com:80/video/watch/?id=4955212n>] That really made us decide to get back to the research again.

Macy: Your background?

Park: I am a professor of chemical engineering at KAIST. I teach process design, control and optimization.

Macy: What happened after the ACS meeting? What actions did you take next?

Park: At that time, I was the dean of the University-Industry Cooperation and I looked into this area again. There was a request from the Prime Minister to do so. I formed a team of scientists and engineers to see this work. I was disappointed at reading the 2004 report of the review committee of the U.S. DOE on this topic, which claimed that not much had changed since the first review. They were suggesting using state-of-the-art measurement technologies to study the materials aspect. I was very curious about what people who worked in this area in the last twenty years, many without funding, were doing. Are they crooks? Are they really crazy people? I wanted to meet them, so that is why I came to this conference. They turned out to be very sincere, honest people who have worked very hard and they believe in what they are doing.

Macy: Now that you have looked at some of the work, do you feel a more solid basis to continue with programs in this area?

Park: I will be involved with this area. By hosting a conference we can get more excitement of people in Korea when they see all these nice people who have dedicated their lives to this area. Whatever we do, we will do it carefully. We are good at making products.

Macy: I understand that energy is a problem in Korea.

Park: Oh, sure. All we have is manpower. We have no natural resources for energy. If we can make this work, we can solve all our problems. Not only energy problems, but also environmental problems. The world would be a lot better place to be.

Macy: I understand the Korean government has been buying a lot more nuclear reactors. Would one of your goals be to try to make the LENR technology be used as a possible source of fuel for them?

Park: Right now we are building eight new nuclear power plants. Also we have been doing research into nuclear reactor areas, so at the top level right now we are competing with other countries for projects abroad relating to power plants. We are participating also in the ITER project, the hot fusion reactor project. In Korea we have a small-scale ITER reactor, we call it the KSTAR. We could do research in this area in a similar manner as we do for the KSTAR project and ITER project. Last year we had a hot fusion conference in Korea. We could do a cold fusion conference and invite the hot fusion people also.

Macy: Would your desired result be that you would foster communication between these two areas of science?

Park: Yes. I would like to invite critics of cold fusion to come. We'd invite them, and they could have a discussion with the scientists working in the cold fusion field. People working on the ITER project and the KSTAR project in Korea. They can have discussion and debate. I would like to bring a working cold fusion device to the next conference to show people how it works and show them that the people working in

the field are not crazy people. We are very excited about Rossi's announcement. I don't know if it will really be a successful project.

Macy: But if it is you would be interested in seeing it be part of your conferences and work?

Park: Yes. I would like to see it working in front of everyone in these communities.

Macy: What kind of program do you think you would have in Korea?

Park: I would like to have fairly good-sized funding to investigate every related area, which is important to make this technology successful. I have contacts in Korean industry, energy related companies.

Macy: So funding is likely to come from the private sector?

Park: Yes. Government also.

Macy: I also want to ask your colleagues here their names and where they were when they worked in Korea in the cold fusion area in the early years?

Lee: My name is Kew Ho Lee. I work at the Korean Research Institute of Chemical Technology. My major is membrane technology and materials science. My work in cold fusion had me try to find tritium by electrolysis. I found it but I could not convince other people I worked with! I still am very interested.

Park: This is Dohyum Kim. He works with me at KAIST.

Kim: I was mainly involved with energy research projects at KAIST, such as coal and uranium, before I went to MIT for my Ph.D. From the early years I was interested in cold fusion and now I have the opportunity to work with Dr. Park in this area.

Macy: What will you do next when you go home to Korea?

Park: What I will do next is organize the information I have from here and make presentations to the approval people who can make a strategic decision allocating research funds. I will also make a presentation to the advisor on Science and Technology to the President of Korea and let them know this is a good area to focus on.

Macy: If you do this and Korea goes ahead in this area, would you say it will have a dramatic effect on what happens to the rest of the world?

Park: I believe so.

Macy: So you are playing a very important leadership role here. Thank you very much and we appreciate your efforts and wish you luck.