

A Report On  
**The Third International Conference on Fibonacci  
Numbers And Their Applications**

Herta T. Freitag

A newspaper article at Pisa, Italy, with a prominent headline: "CONVEGNO PARLANO I MATEMATICI L'INCONTRO IN OMMAGGIO A FIBONACCI" heralded our Third International Conference on Fibonacci Numbers and Their Applications which was held in Pisa, Italy, July 25th-29th, 1988. A stamp: "I NUMERI DI FIBONACCI CONGRESSO INTERNAZIONALE, 26-7-1988" commemorated it.

Of course, mathematicians all across the globe, and especially those who are so fortunate as to have become interested in "Fibonacci-type mathematics," had known about it for some time. The August 1987 issue of *The Fibonacci Quarterly* had brought the glad tidings: an announcement that our third conference was to take place at the University of Pisa during the last week of July 1988.

By mid June 1988, we held the coveted program in our hands. 66 participants were listed, and they came from 22 different countries, the U.S. heading the list with a representation of 20, followed by Italy and Australia. Of course, it was to be expected that at conference time proper additional names would lengthen the count. Forty-five papers were to be presented, several of them with coauthors; there were 3 women speakers.

Theoretically sounding titles abounded. There was Andreas N. Philippou's paper, coauthored by Demetris L. Antzoulakes: "Multivariate Fibonacci Polynomials of Order K and the Multiparameter Negative Binomial Distribution of the Same Order." But, rather intriguingly, practical interests wedged themselves in also with Piero Filipponi's paper, coauthored by Emilio Montolivo: "Representation of Natural Numbers as a Sum of Fibonacci Numbers: An Application to Modern Cryptography." This again highlighted one of the joys mathematicians experience: the interplay between theoretical and applied mathematics.

What a delight it was to meet in Pisa, Italy, the birthplace of Leonardo of Pisa, son of Bonacci, "our" Fibonacci (= 1170-1250). We already knew that—befittingly, and much to our pleasure—Pisa had honored its mathematical son by a statue. My friends and I were among the many (maybe it was all of them) who made a pilgrimage to Fibonacci's statue. It was a fairly long walk, eventually on Via Fibonacci(!), along the Arno River, until we finally found him in a pretty little park. He seemed thoughtful, and appeared to enjoy the sight of the nearby shrubs and flowers. I felt like thanking him for "having started it all," for having coined the sequence that now bears his name. It would have been nice to invite him to our sessions. I predict he would have been thoroughly startled. What had happened since 1202 when his *Liber Abaci* was published?!

Almost invariably, the papers were of very high caliber. The great variety of topics and the multitude of approaches to deal with a given mathematical idea was remarkable and rather appealing. And it was inspiring to coexperience the deep involvement which authors feel with their topic.

We worked hard. The sessions started at 9 a.m. and with short intermissions (coffee break and lunch) they lasted till about 5:30 p.m. As none of the papers were scheduled simultaneously, we could experience the luxury of hearing ALL presentations.

We did take out time to play. Of course, just to BE in Pisa was a treat. We stepped into the past, enwrapped into the charm of quaint, old buildings, which—could they only talk—would fascinate us with their memories of olden times. As good fortune would have it (or, was it the artistry of Roberto Dvornicich, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Pisa, who arranged housing for the conference participants) my friends and I stayed at the Villa Kinzica—across the street from the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Over a plate of spaghetti, we could see that tower, one of the "seven wonders of the world" whose very construction took 99 years. And—it REALLY leans! We were charmed by the seven bells, all chiming in different tones. But—most of all—we pictured Galileo Galilei excitedly experimenting with falling bodies . . .

I would be amiss if I did not mention the Botanical Garden of Pisa—situated adjacent to our conference room at POLO DIDATTICO DELLA FACOLTA DI SCIENZE. In the summer of 1543 (the University of Pisa itself was founded in the 12th century) this garden was opened as the first botanical garden in Western Europe. Its present location was taken up 50 years later. While we may not have been able to recognize "METASEQUOIA GLYPTOSTROBOIDES" the peace and serenity of this beautiful park struck chords in all of us.

On the third day, the Conference terminated at noon, and we took the bus to Volterra. The bus ride itself ushered in a trip long to be remembered. The incredibly luscious fields of sunflowers and sunflowers—an

*(Continued on page 331)*