

# An Intelligent, Energetic, and Popular Greek-American Scientist

Interview with Professor Panos M. Pardalos

By David Y. Gao

I have known Professor Panos Pardalos since 1997 when I was invited to write my duality book for his Kluwer book series of *Nonconvex Optimization and Its Applications*. The first time I met him was in 1999 when he was invited as a plenary lecturer at the *First International Symposium on Nonsmooth and Nonconvex Mechanics* organized by Ray Ogden, G. Stavroulakis and myself at Virginia Tech. Due to his wonderful personality, similar age as my with many common interests, I have been honored became one of his friends ever since. It seems to me that every one in the community of optimization knows who is Panos!

According to Chinese zodiac, people born in the year of the Horse are popular. They are wise, energetic, cheerful, and friendly, good with their hands and very fond of travel. Their capacity for hard work is amazing. People in this sign are usually successful as adventurers, scientists, poets, or politicians. Although Panos is not an adventurer, and may not have any interests to be a politician, he is indeed such a Greek-American scientist with all these characteristics that a decent scientist should possess.



Panos received his Ph.D. degree of computer and information sciences from the University of Minnesota. Currently, he is Professor and Director of the Center for Applied Optimization at the University of Florida.

As an eminent scientist, Dr. Pardalos is very intelligent indeed, well-educated with extensively broad research interests over multi-disciplinary fields of mathematics, economics, computer science, industrial and systems engineering. Due to his deep insight in mathematical programming and broad knowledge of philosophy and science, in addition to his well-known pioneering research contributions in global optimization and scientific computations, he

is also a very active researcher in management science, neurosciences, information technology, as well as the newly developed interdisciplinary research field of nonconvex mechanics (including chaotic dynamics, bio-mechanics in brain physiology, etc.). *The second International Conference of Nonsmooth and Nonconvex Mechanics* was held in Thessaloniki, 2002, where Panos was invited as a keynote lecturer among several other internationally well-known leading experts in engineering mechanics. His research projects have been supported by major grant agents in USA, such as NSF, NATO and US Department of Air Force. Since his first paper co-authored with J. B. Rosen published in

*Mathematical Programming* in 1986, there are about 150 research papers on his publication list. He is also the author and co-author for 8 monograph/textbooks, editor and co-editor for more than 45 handbooks, special volumes, including a set of six volumes of *Encyclopedia of Optimization* by Kluwer.

Dr. Pardalos' capacity for organization and hard working is really amazing! To tell this, I need only one example. The project of his Kluwer Encyclopedia of Optimization (jointed with Professor C. A. Floudas at Princeton) was started in 1999 and finished within only two years. This milestone documentation of total six volumes is an extensively comprehensive piece of work that has been compiled by more than 400 experts in a wide variety of areas throughout the world. As indicated by Professor V.F. Demyanov in St. Petersburg State University, this Encyclopedia covers practically all existing areas of optimization. It is essential that modern and recent results are presented by experts and the reader can get the information directly from the "horse's mouth". This is an essential advantage of the "Encyclopedia". Professor H. Konno in Tokyo Institute of Technology said that he was really overwhelmed when he received this six volume Encyclopedia of Optimization, which "covers many new fields of optimization in addition to complete discussions about standard topics by active researchers in each field. ... it should serve as an important reference for all who are involved in the field of optimization, which after more than half a century from its birth, is being applied to more and more difficult, important and practical problems". It is even difficult for me to image how much efforts these two Greek people have made, how many hours they worked in addition to their many activities in other projects, and how they even knew all these contributors and their expertise. I thought I was a hard working guy, and I should be able to finish the three articles invited by Panos for this Encyclopedia within a year. However, it took me more than eighteen months before I finished on the very last day of the project deadline, and the secretary at Kluwer told me that the Editor accepted my overdue articles with growling.

As a world leading expert in global and combinatorial optimization, Dr. Pardalos really enjoys an international reputation in the societies of mathematical programming, computational economics, management science, theoretical and applied mechanics, industrial and systems engineering. He is the funding editor for the *Journal of Global Optimization* (Kluwer Academic Publishers), Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Computational Management Science* (Springer-Verlag). He is also a managing editor of several book series, an associate editor and a member of the editorial board of more than fifteen international journals. He has held visiting appointments at Princeton University, DIMACS Center, Institute of Mathematics and Applications, FIELDS Institute, AT & T Labs Research, Trier University, Linkoping Institute of Technology, and Universities in Greece. Dr. Pardalos has been an invited lecturer at many universities and research institutes around the world. Due to his pioneering research achievements in global optimization and substantial contributions to the international scientific community, Dr. Pardalos has received numerous awards including, University of Florida Research Foundation Professor, Foreign Member of the Royal Academy of Doctors (Spain), Foreign Member Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Foreign Member of the Petrovskaya Academy of Sciences and Arts (Russia). Recently, two more honors came to Professor

Pardalos: Foreign Member of Ukrainian Academy of Science and Mongolia Academy of Science.

Panos is indeed a cheerful, open minded person with many friends all over the world, and has extensively broad knowledge in philosophy (both in ancient Greek and Chinese), global science, poetry and literature. He constantly says that people who love music are usually good people. The reason he said so it not only because he loves music, but philosophically, this a general truth, and indeed, he is a really wonderful person. You will never feel bored when you are with him. One day, we had a dinner in the Red Lobster Restaurant, and he ordered a salmon meal. He told me the reason that salmon is delicious and healthy because it is a hard-working fish. Yes, I fully agreed with him, and suddenly I realized that it might be a general truth. Since then, salmon became one of my favorite foods too! This is Panos, a Greek-American who has changed the world of global optimization, and might change your research interests, academic life, and personal habit when he is with you. I really like him!