

SAS® Users Group Conference Memories

We've finished a fantastic year of users group conferences, and now it's time to take a look back. Let's see if your memories match ours. Read this article and then send your memories to me on [Twitter](#) (follow swaynette) or send me an [e-mail](#). I'll include your photos, videos and thoughts in a future *SAS Tech Report*.

There were seven major conferences in 2008:

- Pharmaceutical SAS Users Group (PharmaSUG), June 1-4, Atlanta
- NorthEast SAS Users Group (NESUG), Sept. 14-17, Pittsburgh
- Pacific Northwest SAS Users Group (PNWSUG), Sept. 22-23, Seattle
- Midwest SAS Users Group (MWSUG), Oct. 12-14, Indianapolis
- SouthEast SAS Users Group (SESUG), Oct. 19-22, St. Pete Beach, FL
- South Central SAS Users Group (SCSUG), Oct. 27, Houston
- Western Users of SAS Software (WUSS), Nov. 5-7, Universal City, CA

Spring and Web 2.0

The season opened as usual with PharmaSUG. This year it was held in Georgia's beautiful capital city of Atlanta. [David Handelsman](#), Life Sciences R&D Manager, SAS Health and Life Sciences Global Practice, gave the keynote address, "Life Sciences and Analytics: SAS 2.0." For those of you who missed hearing Handelsman, you can often read his guest blog posts at [A Shot in the Arm](#). He just posted "[Dig This](#)." You can also [follow him](#) on Twitter. He's dhandelsman.

Fall, far and wide

If you went to NESUG, were you one of the more than 60 percent who weren't from Pennsylvania? What a great statistic. This must be a great conference if it attracts so many users from out of state! All of our users group conferences draw users from farther afield than you might think. Pete Lund, PNWSUG executive board member, was chatting with a woman standing next to him at lunch. Lund found out that she is a PhD student at the University of Washington. She had been born in China, went to college in Australia and had been in the US for only ONE week when she attended PNWSUG. Her first US users group experience was PNWSUG!

Closer to the East Coast, at MWSUG in early October, users tried their hands at roulette, blackjack, craps and poker. Did you know that Indianapolis is the 13th largest city in the US? Were you [one of the prize winners](#)? [Tell us](#) how it felt to win the GPS navigation system, iTouch or Nintendo Wii.

Beach, baseball and SAS®?

Perhaps the most exciting memories came from St. Pete Beach, FL, and SESUG. When I advertise for it in the *SAS Tech Report* in 2009, the event will fill up overnight. Aside from the great sunny location, it was only eight miles from Tropicana Field, and the dates coincided with the Boston Red Sox and Tampa Bay Rays' playoff series. Many

attendees got tickets to Game 6. SAS Users Group Liaison and Red Sox fan Sara Jones said that “a monumental comeback by the Red Sox in Game 6 occurred, forcing the series to go to seven games. Sadly, the Rays came back to win Game 7 and go on to the World Series.”

SAS gave away several prizes during the SESUG closing session. A student scholarship winner who happened to have tickets to Game 1 of the World Series won a digital camera. She was ecstatic that she would be able to take the camera to the game. Did your SAS camera take great pictures of the World Series? [Send](#) them to me, and I will share them in a future edition of the *SAS Tech Report*.

Westward again

Just six weeks prior to SCSUG, Hurricane Ike hit Houston. Although the conference hotel was undamaged, it took a little extra marketing effort to let everyone know that the event was still going to take place. It was important to the SAS community to keep the volunteer momentum going, restart the local SAS users group, and offer outstanding educational value to the local SAS community. The conference achieved these goals.

Perhaps the most exciting news was *The Tonight Show* promotion of WUSS on national television. The WUSS promotional brochure (produced and mailed by SAS) ended up in the hands of Jay Leno. Apparently the whole idea of WUSS – “being a WUSS” and “attending a WUSS” – caught Leno’s attention and sense of humor. So, during his Sept. 2 show, he held up the promotional brochure and cracked a WUSS joke. The bad news is he mispronounced SAS and WUSS. The other bad news is that he declined an invitation to WUSS.

A note from SAS R&D research statisticians

SAS R&D research statisticians presented tutorials on topics ranging from Bayesian analysis to logistic regression and modern nonparametric regression at the fall regional conferences. There was a lot of interest in Bayesian analysis because more and more organizations are beginning to use this technique. According to team members, one of the things that they like about going to the regional conferences is the opportunity for one-on-one conversations with SAS users. Additionally, these events give them a chance to deliver good news in person. For instance, they were able to tell users about the planned inclusion of ROBUSTREG in the next version of SAS/STAT®.

The perks

SAS users group conferences bring experts and colleagues together. And sometimes, our attendees even get to meet celebrities. While attending WUSS, Ernie Pineda of ASG was dining at an Italian restaurant on Hollywood Boulevard. He met [Marisa Tomei](#), who won an Oscar for *My Cousin Vinny*, in a very unlikely place. Pineda was headed for “the facilities” and stormed in the door – only to find Tomei standing there! She quickly explained his error. Thank goodness Tomei’s bodyguard was on break or Pineda could’ve been very sorry he’d met a superstar.

On the way home from WUSS, Sara Jones, SAS Users Group Liaison, had stars in her eyes. She ran into [Tommy Lasorda](#), longtime baseball player and coach, as she was headed out of the hotel. And [Mary Carillo](#), professional tennis player and sports commentator, was on Jones’ flight back to the East Coast.

The conferences sometimes bring together families, too. At SESUG, one attendee, a student scholarship winner, was walking to a session and ran into her sister in the hallway. Her sister, a SAS user, was attending the event as well. What are the chances of that? As a SAS user at the event said, “Probably pretty high, since it happened.”

Have you had a chance meeting or family reunion at a users group event? Better yet, do you use the events as a chance to get back together with colleagues, family or old friends? You know – great SAS updates in Pennsylvania while staying with your sister or old college roommate and eating homemade fried chicken? [Send](#) me a note so that we can read about it.