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Toto, We're Not in Kansas Anymore

It's another American Nuclear Society meeting. You've been going to these things for decades. You check the program, outline your schedule (you're doing the Decommissioning, Decontamination and Reutilization, or DD&R, track this time), and head for the first session. You find the room.

But what's this? Instead of a room set up theatre-style (rows and rows of chairs), there are chairs grouped around round tables. Ah, you think at first, somebody messed up the room setup. Or, perhaps you're in the wrong room. Did someone change the room assignment at the last minute?

The reality: You're not in Kansas anymore, Dorothy. Welcome to Oz—or, rather, a new style of ANS meeting session. It's the brainchild of one of the DD&R division's most vocal—and vibrant—members, Ken Powers, recently retired from Consumers Energy and now a vice president with Kaiser-Hill at Rocky Flats, who followed the meeting format of his very successful ANS Executive Conference held last year in Traverse City, Mich. (See "Tackling Decommissioning/Spent-Fuel Issues in Traverse City," *Radwaste Magazine*, Sept./Oct. 1999, p. 54.) No longer will you sit half asleep in your chair, taking the occasional note, while speaker after speaker drone on into the morning or afternoon. Instead, ready or not, you are going to *participate!* (Not the best news for an introverted engineer—or editor.)

With a room arranged to introduce audience members to each other and a professional facilitator to keep things on schedule and moving forward, the DD&R sessions became almost a separate entity, an island unto themselves in an ANS sea of regular sessions.

The format was simple. Speakers made presentations, the facilitator keeping them on schedule. Then, under the direction of the facilitator, small

groups at the tables discussed the presentation, coming up with questions and comments for the speakers. In the process, you got to know your table buddies and to learn their interests, their concerns, their experiences. Finally, the speakers took questions, and, in many cases, instead of a simple question-and-answer session, a true dialogue between speakers and attendees was achieved. The learning curve for attendees rose exponentially (as scientists love to say). And at the end, attendees filled out detailed speaker evaluation forms.

"It's very exciting," commented then-ANS President Andy Kadak, an adjunct professor at MIT, who sat in on several of the presentations during the week. "I think this is one method we're going to use to bring excitement back to technical sessions at ANS meetings."

Former ANS President Ed Fuller, with BNFL Solutions, agreed. "I'm the technical program chair for an embedded topical meeting next summer at Milwaukee, and I've already talked to Ken Powers about using this format at that meeting. I think it's great."

In later sessions, the facilitator was gone, and the little group discussions were abandoned, but by then, the attendees had become almost a little family, and the sessions became a real information-sharing experience. One attendee, Rocky Mountain Remediation Services President Clegg Crawford, could almost be described as an additional presenter at many of the sessions, so numerous, helpful, and insightful were his comments and questions. By the end of the week, this editor at least had not only survived, but enjoyed the process, had made some new contacts and solidified old ones, and learned a lot to boot. And I guess that's why we go to meetings in the first place, isn't it?

For a report on the DD&R sessions, see "Exploring the World of DD&R: Big Issues, Hot Topics, Cost Considerations, and More," this issue, p. 51.—*Nancy J. Zacha, editor* ■



*The brave
new world of
ANS technical
sessions*