

PES VOLUNTEER



Kalyan Sen, Ph.D., P.E. volunteered to give a presentation to the PES Chapter in Pittsburgh, U.S.A. in April 2003. The thirty plus attendees at the meeting decided to elect Dr. Sen to be the Chairman of the PES Chapter that was dormant for almost five preceding years and needed to organize two meetings in a given year to be considered a viable Chapter. “Since I was already giving a talk that evening, I agreed to organize another talk and make the Pittsburgh PES Chapter back in business again,” says Dr. Sen. Actually, by the end of 2003, he organized four technical meetings and two two-evening tutorials. At every meeting throughout 2003, he appealed to the members to come forward and volunteer for a worthy cause, like IEEE. His first recruit was his wife, Mey Ling, an IEEE member, as the Chapter Secretary. By the end of 2003, ten officers had been appointed and they met several times to plan for the year and beyond. The year 2004 started with twenty scheduled programs. Throughout the year, ten more programs were added. Also, a new website was launched. “At the end of the year, we felt confident about our accomplishments and applied for the Outstanding Large Chapter Award among some 170 Chapters. To our surprise, we received it,” says Dr. Sen. Another inactive Pittsburgh Chapter, Industrial Applications Society (IAS), was merged with the PES Chapter and received the Outstanding Large Chapter Award for its activities in 2004.

“It was a miracle under my Chairmanship and as a result, I was elected to be the Chairman of the IEEE Pittsburgh Section in 2005. Again, we applied the same formula. Eight existing Chapters became vibrant. We started a new EMC Chapter, revived the Consultants Network and Life Member Affinity Groups, and started a new website and a new monthly bulletin. The whole Section got a facelift. At the end of 2005, we felt so confident about our accomplishments that we wrote a report and submitted it to the Region 2 officers. Not only were we recognized as the Outstanding Large Section in Region 2, but we became the Outstanding Large Section among some 320 Sections in the whole world! The IEEE officers came to Pittsburgh from all over the U.S.A. to give us the plaque for winning the Outstanding Large Section Award for 2005. We had a great banquet with over eighty people in attendance. What a treat! The point is that if we put our heart and mind into something that we believe in, anything can be achieved,” says Dr. Sen.

Dr. Sen credits his active membership in the IEEE PES for many of his other accomplishments. More importantly, he attributes his passion for whatever he does to his success. In the 1990s, he was employed at the Westinghouse Science & Technology Center in Pittsburgh. and worked on FACTS (Flexible Alternating Current Transmission Systems) development from its inception. One of his papers on FACTS was given the Outstanding Technical Committee Prize Paper Award in 2001. After he received the plaque at the PES winter meeting in New York in 2002, he was selected to be the Editor of the Transactions on Power Delivery for FACTS-related papers. His successful completion of the six-year term as the Editor led him to be the Technical Program Chair for the 2008 PES General Meeting in Pittsburgh. Also in 2002, he was selected to be an IEEE PES Distinguished Lecturer. He liked it so much that, in the last seven years, he has spent his vacations and holidays to travel to over thirty five places around the world to give his talk titled, “Recent Developments in FACTS Technology.” Everywhere, Dr. Sen recommended the classical textbook on FACTS, co-authored by

his former boss at Westinghouse, for further reading. Many people told him that they had to know the basics from other sources before delving into that book. They encouraged him to write his talk as an easy-to-understand text book. At every place, the attendees asked interesting questions that made him think more and add more to his lecture material. The progress on the book, jointly written with Mrs. Sen, was going very slow. Then, in 2007, in one place in India, someone came up to him and said, "Where is the book that you promised to write?" "Although my excuse was that I was busy with my volunteer work, it hit me so hard that, after coming back from India, we made a commitment to work on it every night and weekend for over a year and a half and finally completed it in 2008," says Dr. Sen. The over 400-page book is now in production with the publisher. Touring the world as an IEEE Distinguished Lecturer is an eye-opening experience. Wherever he went, he met the most hospitable people imaginable and felt that his hosts went out of their ways to make his visits memorable.

Today, Dr. Sen prefers to hold no position, like his idol, Mahatma Gandhi, but volunteers extensively at the local PES/IAS Chapters. In 2008, he organized twelve technical meetings, including visits from three Distinguished Lecturers. In 2009, Mrs. Sen, Chairwoman of the Pittsburgh PES/IAS Chapters, and Dr. Sen have already organized eight meetings in the first four months. "What inspires me is to see that so many people come to these meetings and learn something useful," says Dr. Sen. At every meeting, he shows a banner that lists some of the things that we all can do to get involved with IEEE. "I have done all of these roles plus much more. Each one of them was very exciting to me, and I benefited immensely from my involvement," says Dr. Sen. He calls for active participation from the attendees in hosting a meeting or being a speaker. He offers a hands-on training on how to organize a meeting. The complete steps are on the IEEE Pittsburgh PES/IAS Chapters' website (http://www.ewh.ieee.org/r2/pittsburgh/ias_pes) and were published in the March 2009 issue of the IEEE Pittsburgh Section Bulletin (<http://www.ewh.ieee.org/r2/pittsburgh>). "In this voluntary work, we are accountable for our roles. But it is not the end of the world if we make mistakes, as long as we learn from them and do better the next time. It is better to make mistakes in such an environment than in the real world that is less forgiving. The soft skills that we gain from these activities are enormous. Considering that we all are hard-pressed for time, it is well worth it to volunteer some of our time. We get back a lot more than what we give," says Dr. Sen.

Dr. Sen, a member of the Toastmasters International (TI) since 1997, realized that although he attended three universities for a straight 10 years, he never had to take a public speaking class. He soon realized the importance of good public speaking when he started his career as an Assistant Professor. "This is particularly important for someone like me who started learning English as a third language," says Dr. Sen. What he did not know when he became a member of TI was that the Toastmasters program also gives leadership training. "I signed up for it right away, since I have been a leader of my peers since my sixth grade," recalls Dr. Sen. Having just been active in the Monroeville Toastmasters Club for about a year, the members elected him to be the club's president (first layer Chief of a six-layer organization). He went on to become the Governor of District 13 (fourth layer), which covers mostly the western-half of Pennsylvania and the northern-half of West Virginia. Under his Governorship in 2007-2008, District 13 showed its best performance in its six-decade-long history and was ranked the best in Region 6 and tenth in the world. There are seventy nine Districts in the world, and they are spread into nine Regions. He credits his volunteer work for IEEE and TI for giving him the training and experience that have fostered confidence in his leadership skills, which will launch him into new directions in his career. He encourages people to practice their leadership skills in great "laboratories," such as IEEE and TI. "After all, we are salespeople. We all should be able to convey our thought process clearly and convincingly. I recommend those who are serious about learning these skills to join TI to gain confidence in their communication and leadership skills. The best and least expensive way to get this edge is to join and be active in a Toastmasters club, either in a corporation or in a community," says Dr. Sen. To find a Toastmasters club near you, please visit www.d13tm.com or www.toastmasters.org.