



Mission Impossible?

There was a focus on energy at the Los Angeles meeting of the Society. The plenary lecturer, Nate S. Lewis, of the California Institute of Technology, gave a sobering and compelling talk on the looming energy crunch that will be created when the petroleum runs out. Taking the “large view” of the planet as a whole, he argues that many technologies will make a contribution to the replacement of petroleum fuels, but many of them are not sufficient alone to fill the role. In addition, conservation of energy will help to delay the total depletion of gas and oil, and the additional time can enable the development of alternative solutions.

Several symposia at the meeting addressed the subject of energy as well. The Battery Division had symposia on lithium batteries and other technologies. The Energy Technology Division (ETD) and Battery Division jointly sponsored a symposium on energy for transportation, and ETD also co-sponsored sessions on photovoltaics and electrochromic materials. Several Divisions co-sponsored a fuel cell symposium in honor of Supramaniam Srinivasan. There were other symposia with energy-related themes as well. The snapshot of papers at this meeting is an indication that many of our Society members are involved in research and development activities in energy production and storage.

The other “Mission Impossible” theme at the meeting was the movie being shot at and near the hotel. There was the report that someone parachuted into (onto) the hotel one evening; and many of us watched as a group of cars was driven forward for about a block, stopped, reversed back to the starting location; and repeated many times for several hours over several evenings. It is always startling to realize how we can be distracted and will accept as “real” the settings and scenes of movies. For anyone not attending the meeting, no, we did not see an actor ride a horse onto any of the hotel elevators—a scene that was shot in a previous movie set in the meeting hotel.

We can attend a movie like the one being shot during the meeting and can enjoy the experience, even though it is a diversion. The task of discovering and developing energy sources and production will not be so simple and it will have an impact on us all in one way or another. Our Society, in collaboration with others around the planet, has a large task in front of us. Shall we accept the mission?

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "William H. Smyrl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "S" at the end.

William H. “Bill” Smyrl
ECS President