

ROGER W. SANT

MBA 1960

Cofounder and Chairman Emeritus, The AES Corporation

As a Mormon missionary in Wisconsin, Roger Sant enjoyed working with Native Americans. Innately curious, he liked spending time with the people, getting to know them, and helping them improve their lives. What he didn't feel comfortable doing, however, was proselytizing. "Part of my role was to convince them that I had 'the truth.' That was hard for me given my respect for all viewpoints," says Sant, whose admiration for Mormon values remains strong despite having left the church in his 30s.



TIMELINE

- 1931 *Born, Los Angeles, California*
- 1955 *Earns BS, Business Management, Brigham Young University*
- 1955 *Commissioned Ensign, US Navy*
- 1960 *Earns MBA*
- 1960 *Joins Hewlett-Packard, Financial Analyst*
- 1974 *Named Assistant Administrator, Federal Energy Administration*
- 1981 *Cofounds Applied Energy Services*
- 1991 *AES goes public*
- 1991 *Establishes The Summit Foundation*
- 1994 *Elected Chair, World Wildlife Fund-US*
- 2001 *Appointed to Board of Regents, Smithsonian Institution*
- 2008 *Sant Ocean Hall opens at National Museum of Natural History*

While telling people what to do might be considered part and parcel of leadership, especially when running a multibillion-

dollar enterprise, Sant's quiet style is more Socratic. "I like grappling with ideas, not dictating what should be done," says the BYU graduate, who found HBS's case method to be an ideal learning process. "So often I left the classroom with a completely different perspective than I came in with," he recalls.

Sant's career path led him through a series of finance positions in the Bay Area before he moved to Washington, DC, for a two-year stint at the Federal Energy Administration. That position fed his growing interest in energy and environmental issues and led him to launch a think tank focused on how to shift energy investment to bring about more energy efficiency. Eager to put his analysis into practice, Sant and a partner founded Applied Energy Services (later called The AES Corporation) in order to try out their "least-cost energy" strategy, focusing on minimizing the cost and the environmental impact of energy services such as heat and light. "Cogeneration," a technique that simultaneously generates electricity and useful heat, was one of those promising practices.

Sant and his partner initially raised \$1.1 million with the help of family and friends, which was enough to build a \$275 million power plant in Houston, Texas, in 1983. That facility brought the company the

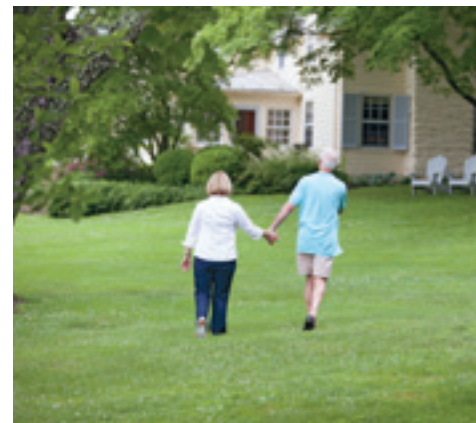
recognition it needed, and by 1988, AES was the largest Independent Power Producer in the United States. The company then expanded internationally, buying and bringing efficiency to some previously nationalized power plants and utilities.

Over the years, as Sant's business grew so too did his personal commitment to society. When AES went public in 1991, Sant and his wife, Vicki, launched The Summit Foundation and a related fund at DC's Community Foundation to support issues they believe in, primarily empowerment of women and girls, ocean conservation, and sustainable cities. Organizations that have benefited from their involvement include numerous Washington-based nonprofits as well as health organizations in Mexico and Central America, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, where 7 million visitors tour Sant Ocean Hall annually. The couple, who will soon celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary, work together on the foundation and are joined by their four children and spouses, who are increasingly taking over the reins. Beyond the foundation, the family supports the arts in Washington through the National Gallery of Art, the National Symphony Orchestra, and The Phillips Collection.

Working side by side with his children, says Sant, is not only a joy but also an education. When asked what he hopes to pass along, Sant turns the question around. "I'm the one who is learning from them," he observes. "I love seeing how they think and what they have to offer."

Clockwise, Top Left:

Sant at a Summit Foundation meeting; with friend Vernon Jordan in New York; in Virginia with his wife, Vicki.



While Sant's accomplishments are many—business leader, philanthropist, husband, father, grandfather (to six)—what might be most remarkable is his ability to merge all aspects of his life into a cohesive tapestry. Having channeled his passion for the environment into an enormously successful business, he then began to use his business skills to help philanthropic organizations.

What's important to Roger Sant is doing something that matters, but that doesn't mean he isn't going to enjoy the journey. Whether he's bringing cleaner energy to the world, advocating for environmental sustainability, or chairing the board of a museum, one of his key principles is to have fun. By fun, he explains, "I don't mean partying. I mean the kind of fun that comes from working together to solve problems."

“ I loved finance and control from the beginning. I like making sense out of numbers.”