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EAST-WEST CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Benji Bennington Interview Narrative Part 1

2-3-2005 and 3-1-2005 interviews in Honolulu, Hawaii

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The **East-West Center Oral History Project** strives to capture the Center's first 50 years as seen through the eyes of staff, alumni, and supporters who have contributed to its growth.

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Benji Bennington

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PART 1

Personal Background

My family is basically from the Midwest U.S. and Canada. I was born in Ohio (in 1934), but for the first six years of my life, we moved everywhere. I can remember we were in Atlanta in '39 because -- I don't remember this but my parents tell me the stories -- of watching them make the incredible movie [*Gone with the Wind*] with Tara, the plantation. They were doing it in Atlanta then, and so my parents had gone over to see what was going on. So until I was about six, we moved all over the place.

My father is an engineer and physicist, and he ended up with U.S. Steel in Gary, Indiana. We lived outside Gary in the cornfields (laughter), in a little place called Merrillville, and most of my schooling was there. But in that era, Canada was looking to the States for people with expertise that they needed for their growing economy, and they interested my Dad in going up to work for Stelco, the steel company of Canada. So in high school, my family then moved up to Canada, near Hamilton, Ontario. It's about 75 miles into Canada from Buffalo. It's just a nice little isthmus of land between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, and it's the fruit orchard district.

So I completed high school in Canada, and that was sort of a shock, actually. I went to a rural Indiana school. I was in the top of the class. And I get up to Canada and they have the British system of education. And they give you exams three times a year. You know, between Thanksgiving and Christmas, near Easter, and the end of the semester. And I was used to getting As and Bs. So the first time that I took the group of exams, I failed English, I failed geometry, and a good portion of why I failed it was because I spelled

American. Even in a math test, they took off points for spelling American. So I quickly learned how to spell Canadian before I took (laughter) the next tests. So now in the U.S., you will find me spelling Canadian or American. Even how they did punctuation was different. You know Canada and the U.S. are very much alike, but they are definitely different places.

I think one of the reasons why my dad -- and I think this is an interesting story about the family -- why my dad was interested in taking the job in Canada. My grandfather, Wesley Henry Bennington, was someone that you would love to read about in a book, but that you probably hated to have as a father. He was a politician, he was an inventor, he was a street-corner preacher, he was an active socialist, he was a good friend of Norman Thomas. I mean, we have letters from Eugene Debs, and books from all these prominent socialists. We have a nice scrapbook about my grandfather.

We have lots of letters and things from Norman Thomas. In 1928, he ran for vice president of the United States on the Socialist ticket, so he was pretty high up there. Just before World War II -- because my father was educated as a physicist and an engineer, the military was interested in having him go to Oakridge, and my dad thought that would be a very interesting thing to do. So of course they do research on your background.

And all of a sudden, they were not interested in my father. Because they found his father. And, you know, they were just not going to take any chances with someone who had gotten that much notice to be running for, you know, vice president of the United States on the Socialist ticket.

But I think this is one of the reasons why my dad was interested in moving to Canada. He was upset with the American government. They were judging him on the basis of his

father, not on the basis of him. And so when we moved up to Canada, my parents became Canadian citizens within the five years that you can do that.

And part of that, too, I think, is my dad has always been very conscientious -- my dad and my mom -- conscientious people who participated in everything. One or the other would be president of PTA or run the Boy Scouts or the Girl Scouts or 4H or something. They were always very involved people. And, if you weren't a citizen, you couldn't vote at the national level. You could vote at the provincial, but you couldn't vote at the federal level in Canada. And of course, he couldn't vote in the States, because he was upset (laughter) so he wasn't going to vote there. So I think that's why they became Canadian so quickly. So that split my family. My brother is four years older than me. When we moved to Canada, he was already out of high school, so he stayed in Indiana. And he still has one son who -- he had six kids -- still lives there. Myself and my two much younger sisters went up to Canada. They're both much more a product of Canadian education than I am because I transferred in high school; my youngest sister wasn't even in school when we moved to Canada, and the other sister was like, fifth, sixth grade.

So my family began to go different directions even way back then. When I came back down to the States to go to university, I went to Cleveland, which is where my family had originally come from. My mother had gone to Western Reserve University, and my dad had gone to Case Institute of Technology which is right across the street from each other. At Western Reserve I was in a joint program because I have always been involved with art, ever since I was a little kid -- you know, taking lessons from teachers starting when I was seven, eight years old. And my joint program was between Western Reserve and the Cleveland Institute of Art. I took all my art courses at the Institute and all my academic

courses at Western Reserve, and graduated with a teacher's degree. To teach art.

I taught art in Cleveland Heights Junior High for four years. It was where I had done my student teaching so it was a place that was familiar to me and they asked me to stay and teach art. It was interesting, the first semester of teaching art there, they were renovating the school, and of course it wasn't done on time, right? They were doing it over the summer but it wasn't ready in September. So we taught in the synagogue schools for a semester while they finished. Cleveland Heights had a significant number of Jewish families and kids, so I quickly began to learn that there's not only Christmas (laughter) but Hanukah, etc.

Great kids to teach. I mean it was an excellent, excellent system. I got good pay, great pay for 1957, the fall of '57. I made \$4,000 a year. Geez, you couldn't live in Hawai'i now with that a month (laughter). I was able to go to Europe for the whole summer and stuff like that, so obviously it was a good salary.

What got me interested in going somewhere else from that was partly because of my Canadian background. Even when I went to Reserve and to the Cleveland Institute of Art, every once in a while they'd think I was a foreign student because I graduated from a foreign country -- high school, you know -- and no, no, I was born American. Huh? "Well then why do you have a Canadian education?" "Well..." (laughter). Had to explain that frequently.

Interest in Hawai'i

Then Kennedy was elected, and he asked, "...not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." There was a group of young teachers, four of us, young women teachers at Cleveland Heights who thought, well, maybe it was time that

we thought about taking a sabbatical year to go back and earn a master's or something like that.

With the impetus of what Kennedy was suggesting and because I'd been to Europe and I'd seen something very different from what I was used to already, I thought, OK, that sounds like a good idea, too. So I applied to three places. I applied to the Peace Corps, took their all-day exams one spring, I guess the spring of '61. I applied to the University of Mexico because of the art of Central and South America, which is so incredible. And I applied to the University of Hawai'i because I wanted to go someplace quite different, but that was still in the (laughter) country, and they spoke English (laughter).

Also I had a cousin, my closest cousin, that lived in Hawai'i. She and her husband were at the naval airbase out at Ewa. So I knew I had family there. Hawai'i accepted me into the art program, and they accepted me the way I wanted to be, which was primarily a teacher. I wanted to update my skills in various kinds of art mediums so that I'm better with my students, which is not something graduate schools typically consider. You come in as a studio artist, wanting to do just ceramics or painting or something else. But I wanted to have it overall, and at that point, Murray Turnbull -- who was actually the first chancellor at the East-West Center -- was the chairman of the Art Department. He thought my wide arts focus was an intriguing idea.

Arrival in Hawai'i, 1961

So I came out here, got all registered, found my place to live, which was one street over from University Avenue, all settled. And then I hear from Peace Corps. I was selected for the first group they were sending to the southern Philippines. But I'd already put two months of rent down; I'd paid all my tuition, etc., and I said, well, can I postpone that and

let me finish this 'cause I've already put all my money, time and energy into UH study?
And Peace Corps said, OK, that would be all right. They'd put me on a waiting list, and they'd let me know again when there was another stint that would be art-related.

My first part-time job was at the University of Hawai'i, because I lived so close to the Art Department on University Avenue and I'm living on Hoonanea Street, which is right behind the school. Why go further afield to work?

This would have been the fall of 1961. I got here in August of '61. My first job at the University was in the Admissions Office. I was the first *haole* [*Caucasian*] they'd ever hired. So all these *titas* [*local girls*], most of them Chinese-American and Japanese-American, started educating me to the local culture in a way I didn't get from being a student. Because the art students were from all different places, and there weren't as many who were local kids. They were from other places in the U.S. So they gave me my first, you know, local snacks to try (laughter). All those salty cracked seeds and hot chips and Spam – you name it.

I'm "Ohhh, what did you give me?" (laughter). They were very nice about it. I mean we really got along very well. As I said, I was the first *haole* who they'd had work there and at that time, the student registration cards we had for everybody who went to the University asked what your ethnicity is -- and Admissions handled both graduate and undergraduate. The cards didn't have ethnicities to tick off. I mean, you really put in what you were. Right? So I'd put in Scotch-Irish-German-English. Well, they had a big laugh over that. And they said, wait a minute, you're *haole*. I said, now wait a minute. If you can come in kinds, I can come in kinds. (laughter).

Life at EWC

Creation of EWC

But one of the intriguing things I noticed from working there was the East-West Center. Because back then the East-West Center was part of the University. At that point (1961) the East-West Center was at least 25 percent of all graduate students, perhaps even 40 percent of the graduate students. EWC really drove what was developing in the UH graduate program.

In the summer of '60, Peace Corps was signed into existence and in the fall of 1960, East-West Center was signed into existence. Ah, here's some interesting history for early EWC. Hawai'i became a new USA state in 1959. Because John Burns was governor of Hawai'i [*Congressional Delegate for Hawaii 1956-59, 2nd Governor Hawaii 1962-74*] and a very good friend of Lyndon Johnson, who was then majority leader in the Senate. They were the ones who pushed to get Hawai'i to be a state. By adding Hawai'i to the United States mix they were adding people who did not look the same as those on the mainland. And so, you see, 1960 was a prime time for new innovations to happen in Hawai'i. That's why the Peace Corps training was done in Hawai'i for any program going to Asia or the Pacific. And -- the East-West Center was set up here because the local community was Asia Pacific dominated, and this was a U.S. opportunity to start working with the countries and peoples of Asia Pacific. And that's why the East-West Center ended up in Hawai'i, not California. Which was also asking to be considered. But no. John Burns and Lyndon Johnson and others thought it was more appropriate to come to Hawai'i to set EWC up.

So in that first year I was at the University of Hawai'i in '61, lots of things were

happening with the East-West Center, right? They were in the Aloha Parade. They were featured as the honored guests at premieres for movies. They were always in the newspaper. So I thought all these foreign students over on the other side of the campus – you know, that looks sort of interesting. And I thought that it might be fun to get involved with them. So I thought, well OK, how could I do this? I'd already decided I loved Hawai'i and was not going home at the end of my sabbatical (laughter). I was going to stay here.

The 1960s

Through all the four decades of the Center, let's say the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s, we had the three programs: a student program, a training or professional development program, and the senior level people that we bring in, like the senior scholars. We've always kept these three threads in what we do.

The major divisions we had in the 1960s were the Institute of Student Interchange, the Institute of Technical Interchange and the Institute of Advanced Projects. And central offices that ran all kinds of things, including back then the Friends of the East-West Center, a special outgrowth from the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council (PAAC).

We, the East-West Center was so big -- because by September of '63 we had about 600 students that they were organizing programs for. Students then went on field trips to the Neighbor Islands and on field trips to either Asia or the U.S. Planning all those kinds of things took a lot of cooperation. And the Friends of the East-West Center and the Community Relations Office were the ones that set that kind of thing up.

Back there, in the very beginning of the '60s, it was also the beginning of Peace Corps, and Peace Corps did a lot of its training on the Big Island, and the UH helped with a lot

of that. So East-West Center was involved in that too. Because, you know, the two organizations were started up at almost the same time, less than a year apart when they were started [*Peace Corps and EWC*].

Fulbrights had been around a lot longer. But Fulbright is an individual scholarship to an individual person to go do what they want to do. They're obviously excellent scholarships, but the East-West Center ones were given to individuals to be part of a group. It's a very different concept. And the Peace Corps was the same thing. I mean you came in, you were oriented to whatever culture and language and occupations that you had to get involved with, but you were to be part of a group. Fulbrights were almost always meant for the individual scholar experience. So though there are definite parallels, it's very different to have an East-West Center scholarship versus a Fulbright scholarship.

We were involved in the Peace Corps training. I don't remember that we ever really got involved in Fulbright. That was already established. That was before Peace Corps and East-West Center.

We used, in many cases, the same bi-national commissions in the field. East-West Center piggy-backed on the foundations that Fulbright had already setup in country and worked with those groups to widen the scope of what they were looking for and how they identified students. They might say there's a type of training that their country needed and we'd see if EWC could, you know, set up something on that. And as I say, the first 10 years were challenging.

Housing, 1960s

I applied to the UH Housing Department for one of their half-time resident assistant jobs

at the East-West Center. UH Housing, because East-West Center was part of the University the first 15 years. So, I applied to UH. But I really applied because I wanted to be in the East-West Center dorms. So they said, OK, they were interested in hiring me but to work in one of the undergraduate dorms at the University. And I said, no, I'm not interested in that. I want to work for the East-West Center. They countered with, but we're already offering you a job and it's all the same – UH or EWC. I said, but no, I'm really interested in getting involved in the foreign student program. So I made a deal with University Housing: If I didn't hear about getting a job in the East-West Center dorms by September 1, 1962, then I would take the UH dorm job (laughter). And on the last day of August, at home, at dinner, I get this call.

And it's from someone with the East-West Center, wondering if I would like to take the half-time housing job with them. And I said Yes! They said, are you sitting down? And I said, um, yes. And they said we'd like you to start tomorrow morning. We have 300 new students coming in tomorrow (laughter).

We didn't have dorms. That was the interesting thing about it. They were still building them, OK? The first group of EWC students came in February of '61, 100 students...no. The first group was actually three students who came the fall of '60. 1961 was EWC's first year of students – the first group in February, a larger group in June, and a good-sized group in September. So in 1961 without having dorms ready, EWC had already started taking over apartment buildings all up and down University Avenue. We had undergraduate women in Fernhurst, the YWCA on Wilder Avenue. We also had some of the younger men in Shinshu Kyokai Buddhist dormitory -- on Wilder. And we took over half of the Royal Tropicana Hotel in Waikiki.

I got assigned to Reynolds Apartments which is right across [*University Avenue*] from the architecture department. It was a brand new apartment building. It was very, very large in two buildings. So we made one section for women and one section for men. And because it was so new, it didn't have any other people in it, so we were able to take over the whole thing, just like a dormitory.

It was great fun to be in apartments. Or down on Waikiki. They put only men down in Waikiki. And EWC had to run a bus down there because there was no city UH-Waikiki route at that point. So we had to run our own bus system down there. Hey, with free buses, all of us up here on campus would take the bus down to visit the guys (laughter), in their hotel dormitory. And you know, play around in Waikiki (laughter). We found it very nice (laughter). They were down there for oh... they were down there in Waikiki for about three months, and at that point the smaller dormitory was ready.

Hale Kuahine/Hale Manoa, 1960s

Hale Kuahine was the first dormitory finished. That's actually the women's dormitory back then. They had made the assumption when they built the buildings that there would be four men to every one woman, because the Hale Kuahine was 120 beds, and Hale Manoa [*for men*] was 480 beds.

And you know, they were wrong! By '63 we were already taking floors of Hale Manoa for women because that ratio didn't ever exist. But, when they were building dorms, I can only assume that that was what they felt, because they designated the smaller building as the women's dormitory and the larger one as the men's dormitory.

The men moved in mid-semester because EWC wanted to get them out of Waikiki, into Hale Kuahine. The men moved into the women's dorm because it was finished first.

Middle of the fall. It would probably have been by November '62. Something like that. They moved into Hale Kuahine since the 12-story one [*Hale Manoa*] took a little bit longer to finish (laughter). During spring semester EWC moved the men out of the women's dorm into Hale Manoa, and later moved the women into Hale Kuahine -- probably in early '63.

Socializing with Food

You know, at one point we had, what, eight apartment houses and a hotel that we were staying in, and this really made very close-knit groups. People really rotated around food. And almost all had kitchens. And if we weren't using kitchens, then we had the cafeteria on the garden level -- when it was opened in 1963 -- of Jefferson Hall. And we all had meal tickets that we could use to eat there instead of cooking our own meals. Everything was always rotating around food. Because we had even closer connections while we lived in all the different apartment houses, we also had group cars. I mean cars driving groups of people. That transferred right into the dorm situation. We still had the cars that could take us out to go to eat different food.

At that time, I must say, that the only other kind of cheap food that was available was pretty much Chinese. Even though in Hawai'i's population the largest single Asian group is Japanese-Americans, back then you didn't have many Japanese restaurants, you had Chinese restaurants. We're talking about the '60s. So it was basically -- only Chinese restaurants. There weren't Filipino restaurants. There might have been one [*Mabuhay*]. There might have been one Hawaiian restaurant. But there weren't a wide variety of them. Thai, no. That was much too exotic for back then.

But, you know, we would always get together and go for food. You know, go out and get our bowl of *saimin* [*noodle soup*] and barbecue sticks or something late at night. That kind of thing. Coco's was very much frequented by East-West -- the parking space, right? Good food. We could sit there 24 hours a day. I mean it was a very, very popular place with the early students. McCully Chop Suey also. You know? Which is still the same. I think they've cleaned it, but... (laughter). But, I mean, it looks exactly the same as it did when we went there. And there was another Chinese restaurant across from it. Golden Duck. And then there was a Japanese place that was nearby that we did go to sometimes. But a lot of the places we went to were in Kaimuki. That's sort of, you know, still a local restaurant row. It's not like the tourist one on Ala Moana. Wisteria, yeah. And then, of course, they had all the good bars down along King Street (laughter). Hey, we're talking students, right? This is -- you know -- this was the heyday of free *pupus* [*snacks*] with your drinks. Right? And so you always wanted to know the guys who got the good *pupus* from the female waitresses (laughter). Actually the current Chinese restaurant across from Star Market? It was Charlie's Tavern back then. Oh, now it's got a Japanese name. I mean, everybody looks at it and you can tell the décor's Chinese but the name is -- Kirin is more associated with Japanese. But that was Charlie's Bar, one of the popular places that we went to. It was right across from the grocery store. You went to the grocery store, then, you know (laughter), you went to Charlie's. Where the 7-11 on University Avenue was another very popular bar. Uh, Stardust, we always went there. That's when you had to know people like Willie Chan, who's one of the people I'll tell some stories on as we go through here, because Willie was the type of glad-hand guy who could get steak and shrimp (laughter), or lobster from the waitresses

– for *pupus*! Because I mean, he was very good at, you know, giving tips.

For *pupus*! I mean, we got serious *pupus*. So we'd have dinner (laughter). Yeah. And, you know, I've gone back there through the years, through the '60s and '70s when alums would come back, we'd go back to see if these bars were still around. And we'd always watch how the style would change over the years, but, we spent a lot of time down there. Saga and the cafeteria was very important to us, too. At that point the University campus -- because the East-West Center is still part of the University then -- had a cafeteria in Hemenway Hall, and it had the huge East-West Center one [*in Jefferson Hall*]. So everybody on this end of the campus, whether you were East-West Center or you were University went to the EWC one.

The East-West Center cafeteria was run by Saga, which was the biggest cafeteria catering company in the country. I remember talking with them at one point, because I was a staff member, right, not a student and they said that in one month at the East-West Center cafeteria, they served more rice than they served in a whole year at all the other universities put together on the mainland. And they had about 200 different universities. Because, you know, everybody who came here ate rice.

And Saga quickly figured out hamburgers didn't make it with these East-West Center and foreign students. I mean, they were not buying hamburgers. If they wanted a good hamburger, they went to a hamburger joint, right? They weren't going to get it in the cafeteria. So Saga planned their menu very much to try and please the people who liked sticky rice, who liked dry rice, who liked brown rice (laughter). And they had to have it at all meals, breakfast, lunch and dinner. Right? Because if you're an Asian Asian, you have rice for breakfast. So they had to have it at all the meals.

So it was a great place to gather and it was open long into the evening, so we would gather around the tables and it was our clique of people that would sit there and we'd be talking with each other and so on. My friend from Thailand, Paitoon, would be sitting near my friend from Indonesia, Nasti, and Fannie also from Indonesia, and Zeny from the Philippines, or Falak from Pakistan and many others. We would sit around the table. And what was really fun to watch -- the ones that were from the other countries always had the steno notebooks with them, because when the Americans used an idiom, then they'd want it explained. Well then, you'd use another idiom to explain that idiom (laughter). And then you'd keep going like that. But they were always there, OK, writing it all down, Paitoon especially because Thais were like Americans. They didn't have very much opportunity to hear English in their country so she actually didn't have as much experience in English as some of the other people. "Benji, explain this one!"

Governor John Burns

One of the interesting things I remember from the cafeteria is that John Burns, even though he was now governor of the State of Hawai'i, because he'd been so involved in setting up the East-West Center, he would come about once a month to eat in the cafeteria with the students. Absolutely no fanfare. Not accompanied by anyone, no public relations people anywhere around. He just came by himself and said, "That looks like an interesting table to sit at," and he'd go sit at that table. And that really impressed the students. Here was a governor, an important person. They all had governors, no matter how their countries were governed. They knew an important person. And Burns came without a lot of people helping him and he'd go through the line himself, and then he'd sit there and talk with the students.

Yeah. I mean, even as an American, that was impressive to me. I couldn't picture the governor of Indiana or Ohio or the premier of Ontario, you know, coming in (laughter), sitting at our cafeteria table. But he did that. He did that, at least once a month he would come. And he enjoyed it. He enjoyed it thoroughly, coming and talking to the students.

Thanksgiving with Duke Kahanamoku

The East-West Center was getting so much attention in the local media. I mean, we were always in the newspapers, we were on the TV. Lion's Club invited us, you know, to this or that thing. The Rotary invited us. Duke Kahanamoku for two years in a row, for Thanksgiving of '61 -- which I missed -- and Thanksgiving of '62, he invited the total East-West Center student body to his restaurant and bar in the International Market Place. We were all invited there for a special Thanksgiving thing. And we all got our picture taken with him -- the second year, at least, he did that. He probably did it the first year, too. The second year he sat in his lovely, big butterfly chair and we stood next to him and we got our picture taken with him. And the women got a muumuu and the men got an aloha shirt. About 500 to 600. And he invited all of them. Extremely generous. Extremely generous.

In that era the percentage of married students would have been small. We tended to have younger students back then, or they couldn't afford to bring the spouse with them, because we didn't have any kind of extra help for people who had a spouse. So we tended not to have extra people, so if there were 600 students he might have had 650 people who came there. The drinks were free, the dinner was free, the entertainment was free. It was just, it was that kind of interaction we had with the community.

Friends of East-West Center/Host Family Program

The Pacific and Asian Affairs Council acted as the group to help develop the Community Relations Office and the Friends. We had the Community Relations Office and they quickly realized that the kinds of people they had were not the type that knew how to do what the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council was doing. So that's why we developed the Friends. We had a very active host family system where everybody, every student who came here -- and others if they wanted it -- got a host family. They were invited to, you know, all kinds of things happening out in the community. They were programmed in collaboration with Dole Pineapple and many other organizations in the community to go to Neighbor Islands.

The Friends of the East-West Center organization was very, very important then, because of what they set up for the East-West Center: working with East-West Center staff like myself, we found host families for every student. So we worked with them on that.

They helped plan, in conjunction with a lot of local businesses and with the Board of Education, to take groups of students on inter-island tours. And when the students went to the Big Island [*Hawai'i*] or to Molokai or to Kauai or wherever, they were programmed into schools to talk about their countries, maybe show how to wrap a sari, how to do a dance step, how to sing a tune, how to play a *tinikling* [*Filipino bamboo dance sticks*], or whatever they could do. And the students got to see some of the other islands. So it was enrichment for the students to see the rest of Hawai'i.

I can remember one girl from Florida whose family could not believe it when she went on a field trip to the Big Island and she was in snow for the first time in her life. "What do you mean? You're in Hawai'i. How can you be in snow?" "They've got two mountains

here with snow on it, Mom." (laughter) And that was, you know, that was the thing she remembered from taking those field trips.

And, of course, with having a host family the students were invited to be with their family for what are important holidays in the American and local Asia Pacific cultures. They were included on these occasions so they could learn a little bit about lots of people and cultures.

The Americans also had host families because, one of the things I certainly noticed coming as a *haole* from the mainland to Hawai'i, is that Hawai'i was both very familiar and very different. Everybody spoke English. The currency was the same. All kinds of things were the same but the people were all different.

Dr. Seymour Lutzky was the person at the University of Hawai'i who developed the American Studies program, which was one of the things the UH did in response to voiced needs of East-West Center people. He led the tour groups, the summer tours that went to the mainland U.S. There was an East Coast tour and a West Coast tour. We also had right from the beginning -- because Tony was here before I came, Tony Chunn -- we had very strong orientation programs. We had three to five week-long orientation for all new students coming in, and any other EWC participants who might have come in at the same time could join it. But it was meant for the students. We had departure seminars all run by East-West Center staff, both the orientation and the departure seminars, every semester. It was quite an incredible way to orient people into an international community.

Hawai'i, 1960s

You know, when I came here, I didn't even know a Chinese name from a Japanese name. I mean, I had never had a conversation with someone with an Asian face unless they were

a waiter in a Chinese restaurant, which is the only kind of Asian restaurants we'd found on the mainland when I was a kid.

And my family did go to Asian restaurants. My dad figured when he took us out to eat every couple of weeks that my mother needed a break from cooking, and because she was such a good cook, you didn't go out for other American food, you went out for something exotic. So exotic back then was Chinese and Italian (laughter), which is about all we could find. So I was used to going to, you know, Chinese restaurants, and I liked Chinese food. But you really can't count that knowing an Asian by just talking to a waiter. So it's very different as an American, a *haole* American from the mainland, to come here and be surrounded by Americans who are Asian or Pacific Islanders.

Not only that -- I mean I came from flat land in Indiana and Ohio. I was used to water. I kept calling this thing out there a lake (laughter), because I always lived near Lake Michigan, or Lake Erie, or Lake Ontario. We were always very close to it. So I was used to water around, but it, it took me about a year to not refer to the ocean as a lake. And it took me probably that long, too, to say mainland rather than U.S., because coming from Canada, I was used to referring to the U.S. But local people would say, "No, no. We're the U.S., too." Oh, OK. So, I had a few things to (laughter) remember and change. I can remember one time -- and that was probably about six years into the East-West Center -- somebody asked me about California. And I said I've never been to California. And they looked at me. "You're an American. How did you ever get to Hawai'i if you never went through California?" As if you didn't have any direct flights from any other states. You had to go through California to get a flight at that time, in the '60s. I said, "I came through Canada." "Ohhhh!" (laughter). So, you know, I think the

next trip I made a point of going through California because I'd never seen it and nobody could believe I hadn't seen California.

Yeah, and I actually -- in thinking about, you know, getting involved with the East-West Center, back there in '62, I wasn't sure whether EWC would look at my Canadian high school and think I was Canadian, and I knew Canadians didn't qualify for the East-West Center scholarship. Or if it went by citizenship. I hadn't really checked. When I heard about the half-time housing job, I thought, well, provides me housing and I get to be involved with the foreign students there. So, you know, I got into that before I figured out the fact, that maybe I could have applied for a EWC grant.

But I was still very much enjoying the Art Department. Then in the second and third year of studying for the art degree, for an MFA, the new chairman of the department didn't like what I wanted to do. It was too different to want to increase your knowledge in a number of art mediums. I should be much more focused. You know, he didn't see me as a teacher. I said, I'm going to go back to being a teacher, and it would be better to have the widespread knowledge. No, that's not what they wanted me to do. So I wasn't getting the right sustenance from that program.

So I switched my major into something called OOPs, Overseas Operation Program, which was one of the special programs developed for East-West Center. I always referred to it as a business-person's Asian Studies because you could focus on whatever academics you wanted, but what you had to have was a national or a regional focus, and I chose Indonesia.

Language requirement

Because of some of my Indonesian friends and the things that, you know, I'd heard from

them, and the beautiful art. The art of Indonesia, of that particular area, really interested me. I was studying art and all my friends from Indonesia had artistic/touristy stuff with them and also beautiful fabrics, because they were told to bring their national dress with them. When they got dressed in their national dress -- and they were from all over Indonesia -- Sulawesi, Bali, Java, Sumatra -- there were quite different ethnic dress from the different regions. So I'd seen all this, and everything was gorgeous.

So, because I chose Indonesia as my cultural focus, then I took Indonesian history, politics that involved Indonesia, and the language -- you had to get proficient in the language. That is one of the requirements that was made of all East-West Center students when they came in starting from '61: If you came from an English-speaking country or English education -- which meant primarily the Americans, Australians and New Zealanders -- you must study or be proficient already in a language of Asia or the Pacific. French and German didn't count. That's Europe.

Before you came, and if you didn't have it before you came, then you came a semester early to start with the language. So summers were very full with Americans and Kiwis and Aussies who came to start language study and get a good basis in it over the summer. And the same thing for Asians whose English needed more improvement because they'd never been in a situation where they really needed to listen to lectures in English. So they had to come over for summer language work. So summers were very full of students, but mostly it was for language study. Not for anything else. Pacific Islanders had to meet the same language requirements but I don't remember any of them coming who weren't already bi-lingual in English on arrival.

I was still with a dorm. And a resident assistant half-time job back then was basically a

little bit of program officer, a little bit of counselor -- you know, we were never desk clerks. Never sat at a desk. Now I think that is an important part of what resident assistants do. They use the same term (RA) now but it means something different. We were involved in helping set up and run orientations. It was our responsibility to alert program officers or to alert the medical people that there was somebody who was having real troubles in adjusting or maybe had more of a physical type of thing that EWC wasn't aware of before they came. We were very much involved in students' social and cultural lives. We helped put together the tours to the Neighbor Islands. We helped program the things that took them out into the local community here because they went out into schools here, too, all the time.

Senior Scholars/The Institutes

The interaction between the East-West Center and the community in the first six to eight years was phenomenal. And this is not just the students. Everybody remembers the students because we got the most attention, I guess, in the newspapers and on television. But back then we also had senior scholars, that's what they were called. Their program was the Institute of Advanced Projects, and these scholars were the equivalent of what we have now as research associates. Some of them were really very, very well-known people. Because of their interests and specialties, we set up a whole system of conferences.

George Kanahale ran the first EWC conference program, which related to the senior scholars. Basically they were given six months or a year to do their own thing.

Whatever their own thing was. But EWC did choose them in groups. For example, we might have one group that was Asian Literature and History and another group that was

something scientific or whatever. And it was from working with those groups that EWC then moved into having a conference program.

The third section of the East-West Center back then was the ITI, the Institute of Technical Interchange. That actually brought in thousands of people a year. Most of them for short term, say six weeks, eight weeks, maybe three months. There were also some who were here for a whole year, depending on whatever it was you were here for -- hotel management, say. Or maybe it might be a whole year's course if you were here for training in Western drama and the UH theatre department.

So there was a wide range of people here at all times. ITI people who stayed longer did get mixed in with the students and what they were doing. We had weekly Asian Pacific Seminars that the students had to go to and the resident assistants were involved in this, too. And these were run by our own staff, the program officers, the orientation officer, etc. We got credit with the University because it was a once a week course.

Guest Speakers/Special Seminars

Part of what EWC staff did was they attracted people who came to Hawai'i to come up to the East-West Center to talk and interact. I can remember hearing Margaret Mead, Gloria Steinem, Dick Gregory, Lee Kuan Yew -- when he came here he was already the head of government for Singapore -- the Pacific Room was full every time. I mean, people were standing shoulder to shoulder in it and hanging out the doors. At Jefferson Hall. And he was just amazing to hear. Just amazing.

Well, he was very straightforward. I mean he had a 20-minute statement on international cooperation and then he just exchanged on the topic with people in the audience. He would listen to who in the audience asked him a question, and if they were Thai -- he

could tell, you know, he knew one Asian from another -- he would answer the question in the context of Thailand. Thailand and Singapore. Or if this person was Indonesian, he'd answer it that way. And you know, he recognized all these faces and the accents and he related all his questions in a fascinating matter. I mean, he was really, really impressive. Maya Angelou. Yes, the writer. She came. I mean, it was amazing, the people that we had a chance to interact with.

And you've got to remember back then, too, it was not only the excitement of learning all about Asia and the Pacific, but it was civil rights turnover time then. And we did have a few black students. We asked some of our black students, if they would be willing to hold a seminar and talk about what it was like to be a Black American and what their experience was like here in Hawai'i. So we had three black students sitting up at the table. We had Reggie who was real black in both skin tone and outlook. Then we had a student who was light-skinned and had different life experiences than Reggie. Lastly we had a *haole* who wasn't a *haole* -- a lot of people didn't realize that she was black until she got up at that table. And so they had very different kinds of things to tell about what it was like to be a Black American.

And back then, whenever there were political strikes or natural disasters or whatever that were happening in various countries in Asia or the Pacific, we would ask our students to put on a seminar to talk about it. If India and Pakistan were at a hot point, what we got were Indians, Pakistanis and other people who were very aware of the situation to sit down and run sessions on it. This was a way to, we thought, to learn more, to let steam off. So those were extra kinds of sessions that we had in addition to the Asia Pacific Seminar that came, you know, every week, that everybody was required to go to.

Orientation

All the EWC staff had a lot of work to do; that's why RAs got involved, too. And when new groups of students came in, RAs assisted with orientations -- to some extent they did the same thing with the ITI trainees. I don't know that they did this with the senior fellows.

In the very beginning we probably had a two-week orientation program. At least a two-week orientation program. And then it got a little bit shorter as time went on. We would take them away from here. We would take them out to Camp Erdman [*on the north shore of Oahu*]. We took them to a camp on the Big Island.

We even did shipboard orientations. There were two different years that we did a shipboard orientation. We'd charter space on a ship coming from Asia. They picked up new students who were from Southeast and East Asia. South Asia was so far over that they flew them directly here. I went on one of the shipboard orientations: The ship started from the Philippines and went to Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan.

Picking up students at all these different ports, so that by the time we left Japan, we had about 95 students. And we had about four or five Americans who were finishing their field study in Asia. And so they joined the group, too. What I particularly noticed from that one shipboard orientation is what happened when we got to Honolulu. Ninety people disappeared into the dorm -- and their family was already 90 people strong. They adjusted very quickly to being here. And so it was a good way to do orientation because we had a captive audience on the ship. We were also a significant portion of the population on the ship. So the ship noticed us. We did programs for the ship (laughter), because they were curious about who were all these students, there were all these

languages going on. So it was an education for the shipboard people, too, to talk with us. They were primed to get into the East-West Center. Because the ships are also very good at offering you rooms like this with the electronic things that you need, no extra cost, we were able to do really good orientation programs. We were able to talk about and show pictures of the buildings and introduce them to the program officers and others that they'd meet, and then talk about their various countries and about Hawai'i.

We'd give them an education about Hawai'i -- what the population is like, the kind of food you can get, how you can get around. All that kind of thing. So there were very good programs. But if you didn't do a shipboard orientation, we'd take the groups off to camps here to get 'em into a closed situation where they would begin to make lots of friends and where we could notice -- which would be part of our duties as a resident assistant -- notice people who maybe were too shy or their language was making them be shy -- not that they were shy, but their language ability was making them seem shy.

We also did departure seminars at the end of semesters. Hey, to go home after you've been through this kind of situation, that could be difficult. You're leaving a whole group of friends that you've gotten very close to when you're here. Departure seminars weren't as long as orientation. But you had to hold them, every semester you had to hold these, because people were always departing. And you know, we were just trying to help them cope. One of the systems that the East-West Center had back then was one of field representatives in each country, helping us select students and trying to keep in touch with the students when they returned home.

Alumni Office, Mid-'60s

And the alumni office was just beginning in the mid-'60s. I was the first Alumni Officer.

No, actually I was the second. They first had Jerry Meredith. And he was a true counselor and trained as an alum officer, and he started it. But he was only there for a year, and then they hired me as Alumni Officer.

It would have been '64 or '65 when I was hired as Alumni Officer. And part of that was because -- I'll go back to the OOPs thing -- this all relates. The OOPs degree that I was getting, one of the things that you did with that one is you did an internship in whatever country you were studying. So you had to do at least nine months there, working. I mean, this was a serious internship. Well, I was an Indonesiaphile, right? So, I applied for Indonesia but Indonesia had a revolution.

So I couldn't quite go to Indonesia. The sister culture is Malaysia. I was interested in being attached to a museum or an art institute or that kind of thing.

We started looking in K.L., (Kuala Lumpur) the capital of Malaysia, looking for a place where I could do something with art. And after another year or so I got a position with this Specialist Teacher Training Institute, which is the college that teaches art teachers, home ec [*home economics*] teachers, phys ed [*physical education*] teachers, etc.

All this maneuvering to set up an internship took a few years to solve. And at that point, I wasn't taking UH courses anymore. So that's why I was going for a full-time job, and that's why the East-West Center hired me as Alumni Officer, in the interim.

I was already the half-time resident assistant right before that, and then when I'm waiting around, trying to see where I'm going to be able to go to do my work in Asia, well, I needed a job. And they were just starting the alumni program, really.

As I say, Jerry Meredith was there for maybe a year. The two of us were there together. I was like assistant alumni officer. And then he left and I stayed on as Alumni Officer.

But I took the one-year sabbatical once I got my program set in K.L. [*Kuala Lumpur*] so I could finish my degree. Which I finally finished in 1969. I started in '61 (laughter). Master's degree in OOPs. I didn't get it 'til '69.

EWC-UH Relationship, 1960s

One of the other problems was -- sorry, I probably killed the program for East-West Center students -- is that the University assumed -- they knew I had East-West Center connections but they didn't know it was different to be a staff member versus a student. And so the East-West Center was not going to pay for my internship, my field study. And I said to the University, but you accepted me, you know, it's your responsibility. Find the money to support me. The University looks at me and then they finally figured out that they, they could not make that program work unless they had only East-West Center students in it.

The OOPs program. So it was a University program, you know, developed for the students at East-West Center. As was Asian Studies, American Studies, the languages that the University offered, because we had so many English-speaking students who had to learn the languages. You know, the University of Hawai'i was offering a wider variety of Asian Pacific languages and more years of Asian Pacific languages than any university in the United States. Because of the East-West Center. So these were the kinds of things that the University was developing to support the international programs, which at that point were part of the University. Remember, the first 15 years, we, the East-West Center, was part of the University. Then we became separate institutions after that [*July 1975*]. But the East-West Center really drove what happened in the graduate program at the University of Hawai'i in the early years.

Chancellors, 1960s

We changed chancellors frequently and they were always UH professors or diplomats, like Ambassador [*Howard P.*] Jones. Murray Turnbull from the University, Alexander Spoehr also from the University, but also from the Bishop Museum. Then Thomas Hamilton, who I think really came to the University because of the excitement of the East-West Center. He was very much an international person. He was a very effective president of the University and chancellor of the East-West Center, because he had both titles. But he was here for only, what, two-three years or something like that?

And then Ambassador Jones came. And he'd been the U.S. ambassador to Indonesia. So he had a lot of contacts in Washington which was the first time that we had a chancellor whose main contacts were not local but were Washington. [*Everett*] Kleinjans came to us from International Christian University in Tokyo, where he'd been for some 16 years. Something like that. I don't remember how many. And his EWC title was chancellor, which really means president.

So we began by the end of the '60s to talk about maybe organizing a little bit differently and focusing on particular research projects -- which is why we developed the Jefferson Fellows and the Population Institute in the late '60s.

So there was quite a changing feast of things happening in the '60s. The East-West Center kept changing. In that decade there were at least two maybe three times when the EWC got significant budget cuts from Washington. I know while I was in the field the end of '67 and most of '68, the East-West Center's budget was cut in half.

National Review Board

In the '60s, we had many advisory panels (laughter). We had the National Review Board

appointed from Washington, D.C. – the source of all our funding. We had the UH Board of Regents because we were part of the state university. And, you know, the UH Regents' mandate was to do a better job of having the University meet State needs. That's why we needed a National Review Board, because back then our contacts with Washington were very close, because we were newly set up and they had a lot of free advice that they wanted to give us all the time as to what we should be, as to what we were doing. It would get awkward here and there.

But it was important to have that National Review Board. And the National Review Board eventually became our international Board of Governors, because we said it's not just national, it's international. We pushed on that kind of thing all the time. That was important, the different kinds of groups that we had that were not only advising us but to whom we had to report. In other words, money from Washington came from the Senate to the Department of State. The Department of State had to send it on "in total." They could not play with it, they couldn't tell us what to do with it. It was really weird. It just went through the Department of State's budget and then came straight to the governor of Hawai'i who gave it to the University of Hawai'i, who then worked with the East-West Center how it was spent. That's a lot of different government entities.

It's a lot of hands playing in it. It's a lot of reporting back. Washington wanted it one way, UH wanted it another way. The governor might, you know, fiddle around with it. I'm sure we had staff members who did nothing but try to match up all these different ways that we had to report to people. And that's why, I think, things like significant budget cuts happened. I mean, when you get cut in half, which we did in '67, or the beginning of '68 it was really taxing. Our fiscal years back then went from July to July

so and about mid-fiscal year, they told us they were cutting our budget in half. Which meant, of course, you were coping with a lot more than half, because you're already half-way through the year (laughter).

The 1960s, Unique Qualities of the Decade

Now, the '60s was, I think, the most exciting time in my relation to the student program, in that we had more foreign students in Hawai'i than almost anywhere else in the U.S. at that point. I mean there were not that many foreign students from Asia and the Pacific in the United States. European foreign students had been filtering through the U.S. for a long time and had developed many programs but not Asia Pacific. So when we started bringing in Asia Pacific students, we had the largest group in the whole United States here in the state of Hawai'i.

Back home now those students, literally, they are premiers and prime ministers of their countries, presidents of their universities, presidents of businesses, well-known artists (laughter), authors, whatever. So they're doing very, very well. In the trainee programs that we had in the '60s, some of those people went back home and started their own programs. The trainee programs were dominated by Pacific Islanders in the '60s; Pacific Islanders and countries in Asia that did not yet have higher education systems, like Cambodia. We were working with them through the trainee program and the student program (ISI). The senior fellow program (IAP), they were the ones that got together into conferences that eventually led to research institutes.

So we have that same thread in all four decades. You still have students, you still have people who were here for shorter times, you still have senior fellows. What was different about the '60s, I think, is the number of East-West Center staff whose responsibilities

were to make it a good educational and cultural experience for everyone. We had a lot of staff people who were dedicated to making sure it was a good cultural experience. It was important that you just didn't go over there to the University and take your courses, but that you came back here and participated in the Asia Pacific Seminar where this week we're focused on Thailand, and we have the Thai students discussing what's important about their country, and foreigners who are very knowledgeable about Thailand sharing things that they know about the country. Those two kinds of perspectives, I think, are important to have: both the person who is part of it and the person who has adopted it. Everything. Everything was fresh and new -- and exciting. It was just an incredible cultural and educational experience then in the '60s.

I met his [*Barack Obama's*] stepfather then. His stepfather was a student in the '60s. My group of friends, in the '60s, my *'ohana*. And it's still my *'ohana*. Many of my friends from then have moved back to Hawai'i now and live here. And we still get together -- about a dozen of us buy season's tickets to the symphony or to a theatre or to go have good ethnic food. We get together for Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's. We still get together. That leads to another interesting story -- I found this out later about our group in the early '60s. One of our group was Tony Chunn from Philadelphia, Chinese-American from Philadelphia. When we finally moved into all the dorms in 1963, he became head resident of Hale Manoa, so he got one of the apartments. Hale Manoa has two apartments on the first floor that they use now, I think, for handicapped students. Because that dorm is not set up to be able to get to the bedroom floors from the elevator (laughter).

Yeah, you have to go up or down steps to get to the living part. But back then it was

staff that lived in the first-floor apartments. So Tony had an apartment and we continued to be very much a group -- after all the cohesion we'd gotten from living in apartment buildings, traveling around for dinner together, going to shows together, etc. We had a Sunday night supper club. We'd say, OK, it's going to be Japanese food this week. And Fusako and Itsuko are going to cook Japanese. So if you want to learn how to cook Japanese, come and help them cook. If not, you get to clean up (laughter). And then we shared the price of whatever it cost for that night. So it would be Japanese this week and Thai that week and Indonesian the next week. And then at one point, Dennis and I, because we were both from Commonwealth countries -- he was from Australia, I was from Canada -- so we did Commonwealth food. And, you know, they were so funny. I don't remember what we served, but, we made a real point of not making Asian food. And of course they're going, "Where's the rice?" We said, "We don't eat rice in a meal." "You don't eat rice in a meal?" "No" (laughter). But we did make rice pudding for dessert! So we did have rice. But we didn't do it until it was dessert time.

Back to why I started this story. I didn't find out until later that actually, our group was followed by some of the psychologists at the University, because they were very interested in our interaction. Because we had a couple of Japanese, a couple of Thai, a couple of Indonesians, a couple of Indians, a couple of Fijians, and a wide variety of Americans: Chinese-Americans, *haole*-American, Japanese-American. We were so cohesive and we stayed together so comfortably. They were very curious about us. And they really did a study on us. I didn't find that out until later.

Another person who was a part of our EWC group was Ditas. Mercedes Rivera from the Philippines. That was her nickname. Like I'm Benji. And she was another very sociable

type. And she started the first East-West Center choir. As the East-West Center choir, we once went over to the leper colony on Molokai. We went over there to sing for them. We had to sign documents with the state that we were going to a leprosy area, because then they could keep track of us later if anything ever went wrong, they would have our names. And we were restricted, you know, from some places where we couldn't go. But it was just an incredible day. We came in at sea level. Yeah, we came in by boat and just went directly into the colony, not seeing any other part of Molokai. That was the '60s.

Traveling in U.S., 1964

In 1964, Tony, Willie, Ditas and myself went to a wedding of an East-West Center student in South Dakota. Tony had gone home to Philadelphia, gotten his dad's car and driven to South Dakota, and picked us up. Then we -- the four of us -- traveled across country. So here you had two Chinese men, a Filipina and a *haole* female. And you know the mainland was not very sophisticated about Asia and the Pacific back then. We kept stopping places to try and find Chinese food, because we, oh my god, we were tired of the *haole* food on the mainland. And Chinese restaurants back then were not very good, unless you lived in the community and you knew there was a good one around. But we didn't know, driving through all these places from South Dakota to the East Coast. Ah, except when we got to Chicago, on the South Side, we found a great Chinese-Thai restaurant. And we had lunch there. Ah! It was lovely.

And then the guys went off to the Playboy Club, because that was something that Willie had heard about and wanted to be able to experience while he was in the U.S. Ditas and I went to the largest department store, which name skips my mind right now, and we had a

great time going through the department store. Then we met again for food and we looked at each other and said, "Chinese-Thai." So we went there again (laughter). And we had tickets to go see Peter, Paul, and Mary at McCormick Center that night. So we went to see them. And then we looked at each other. And we said, "Food!" "Chinese-Thai restaurant!" (laughter). So we went to that restaurant again (laughter). And by that time, they wanted to know who we were. "You are the strangest group we've seen in here. You've been in here three times today." So we explained, you know, coming from Hawai'i their food actually tasted like what it should, whether we got Chinese or we got Thai food. And we had a really, really good time there.

At that time my brother still lived in Indiana, so we stopped at his house. His mother-in-law was visiting from Florida, too, and I can remember when we were sitting down to have a meal, his mother-in-law goes in the other room and gets on the telephone to call her friends in Florida. She says, "I'm having lunch with Chinamen."

And of course (laughter), she said it loud enough that we could hear it in the (laughter) dining room where we were sitting. And it just rolled off Tony and Willie. We just thought it was really funny. Ditas and Willie even went to school with my nieces and nephews, and talked to their classes about their home countries. That made sort of a large impression on my brother's kids. You know, about other parts of the world. And what happened is that from then on, lots of my friends who might have been doing their field work on the mainland, if they were in Chicago or wherever, I'd say, "My brother would love to have you come over and stay with him in his house. It'll be very basic American. You are not meeting rich Americans." My brother ran an auto shop (laughter). So they liked that because it did get them into somebody's house who was

really basic American. This is not somebody who was used to hosting international students, you know.

Yeah, and my brother had always been an avid reader of National Geographic so he really enjoyed meeting some people from various places. And also in relation to my family, if a student went to the mainland for their field study was going to be anywhere near Buffalo, my family would be very happy to come over and pick them up and take them into Canada. This worked even for students who had only a one-entry visa to the U.S. because my parents could come over and sign for them. They could take them into Canada for 48 hours if they signed a paper that said they would bring them back within that 48 hours. And so people who would never have had an opportunity to go to Canada were able to do that because my parents could sign for them.

I can remember one time Eldred Chan, a Malaysian from Sarawak, from Borneo -- he happened to be visiting while I was home visiting. And Eldred was so impressed because he's already been all over the States and nobody knew where Borneo was, they'd never heard even of Malaysia or Sarawak. They were just totally ignorant about his country. And he came up to visit my family and we had our neighbors over, and Fred Uhert asked, "Where are you from?" And Eldred says, "Well, I'm from a country called Malaysia." And the neighbor says, "Oh, yeah, I know Malaysia." Eldred looks at him and says, "Well actually, I'm from Sarawak." "Oh yeah! Sarawak grows this, they do that, they do this." Eldred almost collapsed from surprise that Canadians knew all this. Canada had a pretty significant international education that you got in high school. More so than certainly rural Indiana did. So, you know, Eldred was quite impressed with Canada.

Pacific Island Students, 1960s

In that first 10 years we had so many Pacific Island students here getting their bachelor's degrees and a few master's because no country in the Pacific had higher education, so EWC was their first U.S. stop to get a degree. They were really a very cohesive group, and they worked a lot with the Hawaiian community, especially throwing luaus and bringing Fijian food, or Tongan food or Samoan food. They interacted a lot with the local community. And there were so many of them (especially in the ITI projects). One of them from the early '60s was Big James Makasiale, whose name you should know, because he came back later as director of EWC's Pacific Islands Development Program. He was a great choice. I mean he came from a royal family in Fiji. He had done very well here getting his bachelor's and he had had contacts all throughout the Pacific because he was here four years to get his bachelor's. Met all the other Pacific Islanders, who also went back and got into significant positions at home. To bring him in as the head of our Pacific Island Development Program was really pretty good.

For some reason I didn't know we had picked him for the head of our program, and I was sitting in Public Affairs doing one of my spiels for an official visitor to the East-West Center, and all of a sudden, I look in the doorway, and there's Big James, leaning in the doorway. Dressed Fijian. And I said, "What are you doing here?" He says, "I'm here to become the director of the PIDP program and Benji, I have to go buy pants. You've got to take me shopping." (laughter) I don't know what the official visitor thought.

Jim was wearing a typical Fijian men's skirt. I was just totally surprised to find Big James there, because he'd been a good friend, and part of our group, our early group at the East-West Center. And it was, you know, very nice to see him.

When I was going to Malaysia to do my year of field work in '68, it was taking so long to get my work permit -- not my visa but my work permit from Malaysia, where I was going to do my field work, right? I said, OK, I'll start traveling (laughter). So I went through the Pacific first. I went to both Samoas, Tonga, Fiji, New Zealand and Australia, because my sister was living in Australia at that point.

I'm glad I did that because it was a nice relaxing time to go down there. I'd let Big James Makasiale know I was coming to Fiji, and I hadn't heard back from him, which was typical. So I wasn't worried, I thought, yeah, well, somebody will meet me in Fiji. They had met me in Samoa, both Samoas and in Tonga. Because I was on a little plane from Tonga going to Fiji, when we were coming into the Suva airport, I looked down at the people on the ground, and I say, OK, there's Big James. He kind've stood out.

I mean, you remember how big he was. His head was about like this. You know, he had a huge head, and he's very tall. He wasn't quite as tall as Ratu Mara [*Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara*]. Actually Ratu Mara and I, we got to be good friends. Partly because I told the Ratu he always reminded me of my Dad.

Intellectual Innovations

Teacher Interchange Program (TIP)

One of the other things that happened with Willie Chan was back when I was living in Malaysia in '67, '68. The East-West Center had several year-long programs. One was the Teacher Interchange Program, TIP. It was a one-year program where they brought in high school teachers for a crash program in learning more about Asia.

Well, the U.S. teachers went to Asia as a group field study. And the Asian students -- Asian TIP teachers -- went to the U.S. mainland as a group study over the summer. So,

when the TIP group came to Malaysia, I was there and I said, "Oh, I'd like to be involved with them." So Willie and another Malaysian student who was back home after completing his East-West Center degree, Peter Dee -- the three of us joined this whole group of Americans who were traveling around Malaysia. It was very interesting to me, because, in trying to set up something like that from here, usually you're relying more on those who have the regular tourism approach. And none of the three of us -- myself, Willie, or Peter -- wanted them to see that kind of Malaysia. We wanted them to be able to get into schools, into villages, talk to common people thing. So we were constantly altering the program.

And we had a really great time going all around the country. It's a good thing that the two guys were with us because when we got up to Kotabaru, which is the northernmost Malaysia state and very traditionally Muslim, they were having a festival, and the sultan had taken over all the hotels. All the Western hotels. So of course, here we are a group of almost 20 of us, and we get there and we haven't got our hotel. And, because it's a festival, the sultan had told the banks to close.

So the four days we were there, we couldn't get into a bank. But Willie and Peter went, "OK, we go for Chinese hotels." So we stayed in quite a different hotel than the students would normally have. Kota Kinabalu was having a great festival! I mean, it was really nice to be there at that time. I don't think that the travel agent had known that there was a festival happening. It was not on her itinerary. Because the city had so many good things going on we stayed longer. You could see the gamelan, you could see shadow puppets -- some of the shadow puppets were Malay, some of it was Thai, because they're right on the border of Thailand. And all the good food.

One guy in the group of TIP -- his name was Ralph. He was seven feet tall. Nowadays there are a lot more people that are seven feet tall but seven feet tall in the '60s was really pretty unusual. And I would say, "Ralph, what are they doing in the festival down there?" (laughter). And of course, we got such attention, because, we had somebody who was two feet taller than (laughter) a lot of the people that were there and we took some really great pictures of him with some Aborigines, because I don't think the Aborigines even came to his waist. Oh yeah, they were really small people. That's the forest people in Malaysia, an entirely different ethnic group from any other group there, and they're really small, small people. And I think we really enriched the program that the TIP did.

Junior Year Abroad Program (JYP)

Just for further information, back then the East-West Center also had the JYP program. Junior Year Abroad. It was developed by the East-West Center, a one-year program for Americans in college who were juniors at universities that did not have an Asian or Pacific program for students who were interested in Asia or the Pacific. And so EWC brought them here for a whole year's involvement with things to do with Asia, predominately. Pacific we didn't very much get involved in. They also took group field studies to Asia to extend what they'd learned over the nine months in university. They did two months in Asia before they went back to their own college.

That program is one of the most successful programs we ever had though it only lasted into the 1970s. I know these statistics because I compiled them while I was [EWC] Alumni Officer. One hundred percent of the JYPs finished their bachelor's degree. One hundred percent went on to master's degree. And 100 percent of them did it on scholarships, good scholarships, like Fulbrights. And a number of them are doing very,

very good things in their chosen field of study. It was an excellent program. We only ran it around three or four years. There were probably not much over 125 students who ever went through the JYP program, but it's well remembered by any of them that were in the East-West Center in the '60s.

For those kinds of programs, like TIP and JYP, this is where East-West Center program officers and orientation officers and others were very much involved, in addition to the University faculty. It was very similar to what EWC later called CTAPS [*Consortium for the Teaching of Asia and Pacific in Schools*].

CTAPS/ASDP

CTAPS [*Consortium for Teaching Asia Pacific in the Schools*] has certainly been incredibly successful -- that and its offshoot ASDP, the Asian Studies Development Program -- not only for the East-West Center but also in getting other universities to want to establish that kind of a program. I mean that program, which started basically with State of Hawai'i teachers, expanded into other states and it's now in 49 out of the 50 states. Idaho is the only state -- I finally asked somebody -- CTAPS is not in. I don't know whether we've added that since I last asked that question. It's a teacher education program, quite different from TIP, but successful in terms of how the world is now. The United States and the rest of the world are much more sophisticated about international life than we were back in the early '60s.

I see the TIP groups in the '60s as equivalent of what we were doing with CTAPS when we started out that program in 1988. It was an East-West Center-UH-State of Hawai'i Department of Education Program to educate every single teacher [*K-12*] in Hawai'i better about Asia and the Pacific. That grew into the AsiaPacificEd Program for Schools

in 2002, where we began to reach beyond high school teachers and we started moving into community colleges and universities. And we moved on to involve the mainland too. So, you know, there's a real transition from TIP to CTAPS to APEPS.

SEE PARTS 2 & 3