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EAST-WEST CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Kang Wu Interview Narrative

3-26-2009 interview 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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Kang Wu

3-26-2009 interview in Honolulu, Hawaii

Personal Background

I was born in China, grew up in China, and finished my undergraduate study at a university called Peking University.

Life at EWC

Joining EWC Research Staff

I've been at the Center for a long, long time, since the mid-1980s. I came here as early as 1985 as a graduate student to study at University of Hawai'i.

It was a really unique opportunity that brought me to the East-West Center. I got accepted by the Economics Department of the University of Hawai'i. And the chairman of the department at that time was Dr. Fred Hung. During those days, people from China, they had to have financial aid, otherwise we couldn't get anywhere. So the chairman of the Economics Department, Dr. Fred Hung, he contacted Dr. Seiji Naya, who was the director of EWC's Resource Systems Institute (RSI), asking Seiji Naya whether he had anything like a research assistantship for a new student from China.

And Seiji said, "Yes, I can offer him a part-time position." So Seiji wrote me a letter when I was in China saying something like, "Oh, I got a message from Dr. Hung, the chairman of the Economics Department, and I do have something, I need some help... I would offer you \$500 a month to come here at RSI."

That had really -- changed my life, to be honest. So I got that acceptance letter, then I went to the U.S. Embassy. That's how I got my student visa, and came to the University of Hawai'i!

So I came here, and I worked directly for Ted James -- Dr. William James. Ted was my boss, and Seiji Naya was the big boss, of course -- director of RSI. And my supervisor was Pearl Imada.

Anyway, so that's how I came to Hawai'i, University of Hawai'i, as a master's candidate. I started immediately as a research assistant under Ted James and directly working for Pearl. And that's how my graduate study began. And then, of course, my involvement with the Center was from the very beginning of my graduate study. I was not a participant. I was just like an outside student working at East-West Center as a research assistant.

Joining the Energy Program, 1986

After about half a year I was told by the researchers here, including Ted James, Todd Johnson, Pearl and other people, that there was a scholarship at East-West Center that was available. That everybody could apply. So I applied at that time. We called it a grant at that time, the East-West Center grant for students. And whoever got the scholarship became a grantee, rather than a degree fellow as we call it today. So I applied, while I continued my study at the University of Hawai'i.

Next year, 1986, I got the scholarship -- the grant -- from East-West Center. That's really when I started my next four years of study, setting the, kind of a platform for my involvement with the Center for another four years. In the middle of the scholarship period I transferred to Ph.D. So my scholarship time extended from two years to four years. You may ask why, how I got involved in the [EWC] Energy Program, right? I was in development economics and I barely knew the [EWC] energy people, you know. I met David Fridley as a friend because he spoke perfect Chinese. And also Todd

Johnson, who also spoke pretty good Chinese. Those two fellows were from the Energy Program and they helped me at the beginning, you know. I was -- my English was really poor at that time. So they helped me out quite a bit, and although my TOEFL score was not too bad, my spoken English was very broken at that time. So, that's how I knew these two fellows.

But that's not the reason I joined the Energy Program. The reason is very -- how to say -- accidental. Because when I applied for the scholarship -- the researchers were called research associate at that time rather than research fellow, right? Actually, the research fellow had a different definition then, meaning you were visiting or you were project fellows. And if you were a long-term research staff, you were called research associate. So when I applied for the scholarship, I got accepted among the RSI research associates: like Seiji Naya, Ted James, Fereidun Fesharaki.

At that time the research and students were very closely linked, closer than today, to be honest. So they discussed how to allocate the students among RSI research. You know, you have groups studying development policy, energy, minerals and international relations (Charles Morrison was sitting in there) and some other programs. So they allocated the students.

This is what I heard the story was. When it came to my turn -- if I heard it and remember correctly -- Seiji asked Fereidun, "We have a Chinese guy here. Do you want him? Or I have an Indian guy also. You can pick one of them."

Fereidun's doing energy stuff, and of course, China is part of it. And he has never had Chinese students before. So he said, "OK, I'll pick the Chinese guy." The Indian grantee was also my friend -- I forgot his name -- but he's also very, very good. But, anyway, so

I got picked by the Energy Program to be an Energy Program student.

When I heard about it, I felt like, “Did I apply for the Energy Program?” But I understood the reason because, you know, among the programs you have, you cannot say everyone goes to one program within RSI. So I accepted, which proved to be a wise decision. That’s how my relationship with the Energy people started. In summer, 1986. Then I started knowing other people like David Isaak, Lisa Totto, and Nancy Yamaguchi. Oh, a bunch of other people: Pat Wilson and Tom Wilson, Robin Brandt and, of course, David Fridley’s still there. And a bunch of other people I got to know indirectly, like Kirk Smith, Toufig Siddiqi, Tilak Doshi, etc. The other one is Sam Pintz – he’s with HECO [*Hawaiian Electric Company*] now.

Anyway, supporting staff like Jane Smith-Martin and Gayle Sueda. Jeni [*Jennie*] Miyasaki – she was the one who probably knew me the earliest time because of my association with Seiji.

At that time, mid-1980s -- well, certainly before that but I knew only from the mid-1980s -- clearly they have an energy program. They also have a development policy program -- which is Ted James and other people there -- and energy program [*with people*] like Kirk Smith and Fereidun Fesharaki. Other people, too. I was involved, but as with every other student, the main part of your work, my work, is still graduate study, right?

So for the next four years I’m kind of involved with energy research as a student, on and off, until I got my master’s in 1987 and Ph.D. in Economics in 1991. And at that time, I was looking for something to do. I was offered, at that time, something called a visiting fellowship by Lisa Totto. So my involvement with the Energy Program as a researcher started in the summer, June 1991.

Because by that time I believe Victor Li [*EWC President 1981-90*] had already left East-West Center. And that was before Mike Oksenberg joined the Center as the president. I was a student transferring to visiting fellow. At that time the program was called Resources Program. Resources because it includes two parts: energy and minerals. That's where Allen Clark and Charles Johnson were. Charles Johnson and Allen came from pretty much a different background than Fereidun. And Allen continued to head the minerals part.

Institutional Transitions

Program on Resources: Energy and Minerals (PREM)

And I think although they called it Resources Program, it more or less became an independent institute within the East-West Center. Fereidun was the director. And Allen was the assistant director. Only later, I believe '92 or '93 the name changed to Program on Resources: Energy and Minerals, called PREM.

PREM was formed around 1992 or '93. Then Mike Oksenberg joined the Center, 1992 right? Then a research position opened at the East-West Center. I applied. And I still remember that the applicants -- including myself -- competed for this position.

And, yeah, I got the position. So I formally joined as a research fellow -- by that time the title was already changed to research fellow.

My offer letter came actually from Mike Oksenberg in February '93. He's the one who signed my offer letter. So from '93 to date, that's been my position. We are now known as fellows and senior fellows, right?

Later I become a senior fellow in 2005. So, I've been with the Energy Program, Program on Resources, all the time since '91 as a researcher or as a student since '86.

As far as the research involvement was concerned I was transferring to the Energy Program at that time. But in terms of my original background, I'm still an economist -- economics is my background. I still did the traditional trade and development economics. So my dissertation was developed quite early, before I joined the Energy Program as a researcher.

I developed it as early as 1988, '89. And then there was a democratic movement -- student protest, in China in 1989. That delayed my dissertation. First off, my dissertation is on China. In 1988, I chose the topic of trade protection. Trade patterns and protection for China. So my dissertation committee included people like, certainly Fereidun Fesharaki was there. I also had Ted James and Chung Lee.

Dr. Lee, he's a proxy member, but also Calla Wiemer, a professor from the economics department, and Bernie Campbell, if you remember him. He's also a proxy member because Dr. Hung could not be there. Anyway, the subject is more like trade and development economics, with minor coverage of energy. So my dissertation itself is not too much about energy. Although my research paper -- during my period as a grantee I did a research paper that was about energy. So in a way that, the dissertation itself may not be directly involved or related to energy issues, but we all need those kinds of basic training as part of our career buildup.

I think that many students got the chance of writing on papers and co-authored papers *[with Fereidun Fesharaki]* that were published by the Energy Program.

[Editor's note: Kang Wu was asked about the location of the Energy Program at the Center. The cottages were wooden buildings located between Burns Hall and Hale Manoa, where Friendship Circle and landscaping are currently.]

The Energy Program has never been entirely out there. But the cottages are an important part of it.

I think the Energy Program always has two parts. You know, one part is in the building, Burns Hall, one part in the cottages. But never entirely in the cottages. Although at that time they might have heavily used the cottage. And I just want to say that now that we talk about history, I think at one time PREM -- just like any other long-time institute within East-West Center -- had been developed to a large size before the RIF [*Reduction in Force*] came. Let's say '94.

'92, '93, '94, or part of '95. It was the peak of almost all organizations at East-West Center. I heard we had like 300 people or something like that. Yeah, on the staff. Even for PREM, the Program on Resources, Energy and Minerals, the total staff number was about 35. Maybe 30, 35, including interns.

It's a lot, yeah. Compared to today. And even on the regular staff, we had three new fellows hired: Ron Ripple, Ron Hagen and Eugene Khartukov. And then at one time we had Cary Bloyd, who was not on our staff, but heavily involved through a partnership program with Argonne National Laboratory. I'm also sure, pretty sure that Allen's side also hired new people. I couldn't quite remember their names, but we had a few other fellows on the minerals side. But we were one program, right? So it's quite a large staff size for PREM. And then after '95 things have changed.

We were down-sized, just like all other programs here. Sometimes the whole program was gone and many people were let go. The same thing happened to the Energy Group. So, we started downsizing in '95.

Downsizing/Restructuring

Talking about evolvment -- 1998 was when Charles Morrison became president. We had another restructuring of the program again. No more independent institutes. PREM was gone and became part of the Research Program. Energy now is part of the economic study area, since 1999, I would say.

Down-sizing started in 1995 when we had the RIF [*Reduction in Force*]. Everybody has highs and lows, you know, of your time. During the restructuring -- well, the first down-sizing. It was not happy moments at that time. Everybody worried about their jobs. And some fears were confirmed to be true. And it's sad to see the Energy Program downsized to the current size, you know, so small.

It may be natural, you know, but if I think about it -- at that moment, personally I felt bad to see people moving to different programs or leaving. It's really down-sizing with an uncertain future.

The restructuring -- I still remember Bruce Koppel, you know -- he's such a nice person - - of course, he was a vice president, too, at that time in charge of Research. So we had many meetings, I still remember that. Academic meetings, I was part of it, to discuss the future, the RIF, how to down-size, and who would go first --

Those were not happy moments. Some individual cases were not happy either.

Somehow you have a fight between the person and the management and I was involved in the academic committee reviewing the case.

'95, '96 were difficult and uncertain years. Although we had a restructuring again later when PREM was gone and the Research Program was formed. Honestly, it doesn't matter what direction it went in the end -- today it turns out to be OK -- but when you

have big changes there is great uncertainty.

So everybody had to adapt to the new environment. And, I think, quite a bit of restructuring was going on, like Charles Johnson becoming the director -- I mean coordinator of the environmental program. And that's like a transfer, you know -- and then Allen joined international relations and the political governance group.

Everybody had to, you know, people from different backgrounds, adapt to the new structure. So I wouldn't say that it's particularly odd for PREM, everybody had to be dissolved to form a more integrated Research Program. Muthiah [*Alagappa*] was the director, the first director of the Research Program.

When we downsized the whole Center, our students also, their numbers were coming down, too. That naturally reduced the source of the [*inaudible*] -- and also there was a change of policy, too.

The policy change was -- at least at one time -- more emphasis was put on the academic work than research, than research involvement. So you had several reasons that many programs become smaller.

I think that the down-sizing is really about the way that you have to adapt to the situation.

Also many people did have the intention of finding their own career after their involvement at East-West Center. I think that's about a fair assessment. It seemed to be that many people, they left voluntarily, for a better job, and others...

Also, it's natural, because the energy and minerals program involved the students very heavily. And many of the students could stay to become a participant after they got their degree for one year, or 18 months.

Partnerships and Networks

Energy Programs in Latin America, China

I was involved in many things. When I first became a visiting fellow, I was signed up on a specific project that is a Latin American energy project. So I was involved in Western Hemisphere energy for three years, '91 to '94.

I agreed to the assignment mainly because we all know that if you are good you're supposed to be able to do everything, right? Plus, when I got my Ph.D., I was what, 26? So, I needed to, you know, really... broaden, exactly. And the Energy Program has been known for good external funding.

So at that time, our main financial support -- other than the East-West Center -- our main financial support came from the U.S. Department of Energy, and also USTDA [*Trade and Development Agency*], ADB [*Asia Development Bank*] and some other donors.

There was a huge grant from the USTDA to support a Western Hemisphere energy study. I think I was involved in the organization of three conferences in Houston and Dallas. We called it IPGC, which is Inter-America Petroleum and Gas Conference. Actually I published my first book on Latin American energy. I published it in 1995 as a result of the project work. And after '94, '95, the project kind of gradually came to an end, that Western Hemisphere study. So I shifted to the Asia Pacific region. And I shifted more to China.

The shift was also because David Fridley left, I believe in 1993. He was the head of the energy project here for China. I have since got involved more in the China and Asia Pacific region. So the study covered how volatile the energy market is, developments of energy itself as a sector, and also the energy-economic links, and how important they are

to a country.

Within the Energy Program, most of the people had economics as background. Myself included. One important part of our work was to study energy issues themselves and energy economic linkages. How the role of energy played in individual countries in Asia and in the U.S. And in the bigger picture are the oil prices, the direction of oil prices, oil market developments, and the role of natural gas and clean fuels. Oil-related clean fuels refer to those in the transportation sector.

I'm not a coal expert, so we had people from the coal area, like Charles Johnson and others who studied clean coal technology. And Cary Bloyd was involved in renewable energy, clean fuel in the cities, in urban areas.

One of the biggest issues is energy economy. Because energy itself is a lot to study, and the relationship with the economy is one of the main subjects.

Energy Program, Post-RIF

And then because the Center is emphasizing cross-disciplinary research, we did other kinds of cross-subject areas, like energy security. Energy security is an area I did quite a bit of work in, and energy environment. Energy environment is another cross-disciplinary area. I'm not an environment specialist myself, but energy is a major contributor to environmental issues, problems of the world today.

So how energy sector development contributes to environmental issues, and more specifically how to use more clean transportation fuels, is an area that I have been focusing on. And we have tons of projects to study the oil market developments and future energy, and energy policies, and clean energy issues. Those are the kind of major subjects during the past 10 to 15 years.

Personally, I'm very interested in renewable energy as part of the overall energy development and policies. I already shifted part of my focus to renewables in China. Still it is more from the economics point of view, to assess the economic viability of using renewable energy. In oil- and gas-related areas, you have bio-fuels, which is that area that I'm focusing on right now. So bio-fuels, like ethanol and bio-diesel, particularly the second- and third-generation biofuels, have a bright future and room to grow. Actually I did a working paper on bio-fuels in China. But you are right, it's not the bulk of our work. We're not renewable energy specialists per se. But the interesting thing is -- energy is a huge area but still -- the feeling of ordinary people is that that's too narrow. It depends on who you are talking to. For people who want a broad set of coverages, even energy as a whole is not enough.

We only consider energy as one area of the whole economic development. Another part of my work is more specific. I can be very specific to study natural gas pipelines, oil pipelines. Natural gas is a really important part of my work. And in geo-politics, that's energy security. I'm touching upon those issues as well. Like, I published something about Central Asia and about the oil and gas pipelines.

There was an API -- *AsiaPacific Issues* paper some time ago. I also published one on the role of natural gas for the future of Asia. So as you can see, it seems that the energy issue is a never-ending issue. Every year, you have some kind of different area.

Last year, the super high oil prices, and this year, economic recession. The financial crisis. And, where's the role of energy? How might that affect energy or how might energy affect the economy? And what about the long-term future of energy?

"Peak oil" advocates believe that the world's oil supply is peaking or will reach the peak

soon. I am not one of the “peak oil” advocates but I am concerned about where we get our future energy. So what are the future energy options? We only talk about economically viable options, not just scientific options.

But, assuming some of the energy technology is available, are they viable under economic conditions? That’s what we are looking at. We can compare the cost of different energies, and availability, and to see if for a certain country or a certain area, whether they are suitable, or for the entire human mankind, and whether it’s suitable to develop a certain form of energy.

Intellectual Innovations

In-House Energy Models

Basically we have what we call “demand models” to project the future demand of energy. We have “refining models” as well to study the downstream oil market, very specific and technical. We also have a “price model” to project oil prices. Another one is an “electricity model.”

All these models were developed in-house. And then there are the common tools everybody can use. That is an econometric study, econometric regression models using regression tools. Linear programming, those kind of issues. Those are well-developed models that you can use.

And, for the Center, because I have a focus on the Asia Pacific region, part of the work is really fact-finding. You have to get the facts right. And get a true story, and put it into a rigorous kind of analytical format to see how -- because there are two ways of doing research, you know. One is you focus on advanced countries, like U.S. or European countries, which have well-supplied data. You don’t have to spend time on data. You

just make sure that the best model, the most sophisticated model is being applied. That's one area. Many people do that.

But that's not the major focus of East-West Center, because we are focused on the Asia Pacific region. To get the data right and to analyze some of the basic things, that will take a lot of time and research. So the data itself, the data search to get the right data, to assemble these data and disseminate the results – that's part of the research as well.

As long as no other one has done that, you contribute to the work, because you want the academic and research policy world to know these things, which had never been disseminated to the written and academic world. I think that many people at East-West Center are doing this.

It's not part of our mission for us to study what happened to the U.S. per se, because you have more advanced institutions with different funding and different sources of data doing that. You are sitting here in Hawai'i and you're supposed to do collaborative research -- well, that's how we exchange the information, exchange the views and the research findings with Asian people and scholars, right? Working with Asian scholars and getting some of the results crossed to the research world is part of the job. So that's why -- certainly I am not speaking for other people -- you can go to a small area to dig something, and that's the contribution. For us, we go deep into the energy sector of the country.

We may go to a terminal, and we may go to a pipeline site or refinery to really know what's going on there. And then bring back the findings, and combine it with the data to have a better analysis of the country. I think through the studies, our contribution is that people can talk in the same language, can contribute to the understanding of the situation.

So, when there's a policy issue, once you put all people on the same spot, the same understanding -- when there's a crisis, for instance an oil price crisis or energy crisis or financial crisis or tsunami crisis like three years ago -- once you can talk using the same language you can convey the policy options to people. Otherwise people talk using different professional languages.

Yeah, apples and oranges. I'm not talking about just the spoken language. We're talking about the research language. So that is why I think through these years that many people in Asia, they know East-West Center, they feel that through their participation with the Center, they can talk about the same thing when there is a need to do certain things like policy recommendations. At least they can draw upon expertise and present something that people understand.

Because if they understand, they will let their people understand. And if we understand in the U.S., if the American people here understand the issues in Asia, they can communicate with people in the West. It's always a better understanding of each other and better solutions to problems. I think that's what each of the programs is doing. You know, issues are never as simple as, "OK, this is done."

A project you may be able to finish, but the issue will come back again.

Like the 1980s, we were already talking about energy crisis, but today we talk about that crisis again. Like President Obama, his new policy if you listen to him very carefully has a lot of energy stuff in it. Green energy and less dependence on fossil fuels, and things that can affect millions, millions of people's lives if a policy is adopted.

Although every country's energy problem is kind of unique, there are many common features as well. Some countries may think, "Oh, I have a unique energy problem!"

Actually, other countries may have already dealt with the problem, had that kind of problem already before. So you can learn. You know, you can get a shortcut. You don't have to repeat the same mistake.

China /Pacific Islands Energy Projects

Other people may have done other things that I'm not fully aware of but just to speak for myself, here is a very specific example in the oil-refining business. When I was a student, I was not a researcher yet, the USDOE [*U. S. Department of Energy*] supported East-West Center for a study to understand the refining economics and operational economics in China. That was 1987.

At that time, China was unknown to many, many people. The DOE money brought in three Chinese senior refining economists, refining engineers actually, and also economists, from the state oil company in China. They came here, to the cottages (laughter) and they stayed in Lincoln Hall. They were here for one month, or one and half months. Every day they did only one thing. That was linear programming for cost minimization analysis.

Linear programming, which was developed by the energy program here, specifically, Tom Wilson and David Isaak. These two guys are genius. China before that had never used linear programming to control the crude flows in their refineries. So when these three engineers/economists finished the work here, they felt that they had learned so much like never before and when they went back, they applied the model to all major Chinese refineries. And, you know, the economic benefit of that kind of work was enormous for the country.

At that time, you know, we were still using Wang computers, PCs. 868 -- 8086.

Not even 286. It was before 286. You know you had 286, 386, Pentium, and then here we are today. That was before that time. Nowadays they apply modern technologies, and they apply huge linear programming to the entire refining system. But this was before that, it was 1987.

So before that, they didn't apply any linear programming to their refining system. And the impact was tremendous. Let me just give you one example of using the old computers. The linear programming we were using for calculation in 1987, you had to wait about eight hours or over night to get results.

So you plug in, you punch in the numbers, go through the East-West and university computer system, and next morning you came back and checked the results. If you find one mistake, you have to go back again and do that again. The same process today, it takes just seconds. You plug in, results are out. Something's wrong, you do it again quickly.

Another example is our workshops. I don't know if you remember in 1991 we had a huge energy conference here in Jefferson Hall. That was IAEE, which is International Association for Energy Economics.

You remember Jim Rizer? Well, Jim Rizer worked quite a bit -- I was only indirectly involved -- in Pacific Islands research. Remember the Pacific Islands energy ministers' energy conference?

So we did a Pacific Islands energy study for several years. The influence was also very big. I know our PIDP [*Pacific Islands Development Program*] program is deeply involved in the Pacific Islands activities today. But on the energy side, at that time, it made a big difference. Most Pacific Islands energy ministers or chiefs -- if you don't

have a minister, send an energy chief -- came to the conference.

EWC's Impact

On Asia/ Energy Perspective

I think we generally influenced Asia from an energy perspective in several ways. One way is really heavy participation. I already mentioned that at peak participation we had about 30-plus people in PREM. We involved more students, right? The scale of student involvement was really large. And you name it: Indonesia, Korea, Japan, Thailand, Singapore, China, etc.

You probably also remember Tilak Doshi, who was also part of the students program but heavily involved in energy. Many people, even when they were students, they got involved in our research and published! So the influence on their career is huge. We had another guy you probably remember, Al Troner?

He's from New York. Al Troner, Tilak Doshi, and some Thai people, Indonesians, and my fellow Chinese.... Wawan [*Widhyawan Prawiraatmadja*] was one of those from Indonesia. Now he's senior vice president of the state oil company of Indonesia, Pertamina.

Of course, he was here at the Center for a long, long time.

And other people only had a short-term visit, just a conference -- participating in a conference. We did a lot of trainings, too. We trained a lot of people from energy fields for the past 15 years. We call it on-the-job training.

But some were project or visiting fellows, like the three Chinese engineers/economists I mentioned earlier. We also have people who came here longer. So we have had people from as far away as Saudi Aramco (that's Saudi Arabia), and people from Korea (KNOC,

which is Korean National Oil Company), from several companies from Japan, from Malaysia (Petronas), from Indonesia, from India (IOC, Indian Oil Company), and China... It's the same story for many other participants at the East-West Center from other programs, that we continue to hear about all the time actually. I mean the participants are where the real world influence is.

They go back to their countries and they remember -- the name of the East-West Center in Asia, in many countries, is kind of deep. And they sometimes hardly associate it with Hawai'i, you know. It is in Hawai'i, but East-West Center seems to be a prestigious organization that many people can associate themselves with, because they're either grantees themselves or they are participants.

Yes, it is a door-opener. But I think for China, the interesting thing is the EWC influence is more in the big cities, somehow.

Yeah, we didn't go that far, as far as the energy area is concerned. In the oil business, in the energy business, in the capital and large cities, Beijing or Shanghai or Guangzhou, it's very much so.

Challenges for the EWC

But if you go further to the Western area, I'm not so sure. Particularly today because information's so available, than 10, 20 years ago. The relationship of China and other countries and the U.S. has been developed. People have more choices, simply.

I mean, they don't necessarily have to go through the East-West Center to understand the U.S., at least the Asian people that we know. They have more choices, they can fly directly to Washington, D.C., they can go to the mainland U.S. I mean, it's a challenge, actually for us to stay on top of this. Still we have an advantage. We're here in Hawai'i.

But the physical advantage can be, can be less and less relevant if we don't do our job. You know, because the plane is faster, and people in the past probably had to stop here, but more and more they don't. So it's a challenge for the Center.

If you talk about today it's definitely more challenging, and it requires us to go out to meet people, and... I think that the advantage of the Center is -- we'll still be a gathering place -- we can have well-organized professional conferences, workshops and those kind of formats, that can be a way. Research side, we still have some advantage, perhaps to the people from the U.S. to know Asia, to learn Asia, because we still have expertise here to understand Asia. Part of the reason is that the researchers here are also adapting themselves. I think they travel more often than before, going to Asia. Well, the East-West Center research always goes to Asia, but it seems to me that they can do more. As you know, information technology works in both ways, right?

Asia probably has more ways of understanding the U.S., but the U.S. also has more ways to understand Asia, without going there, without physically showing up. But more like, through other kinds of communications. So that an advantage in a sense is that our people, our researchers here still have the best knowledge about Asia and this can be an attractive place for people from the mainland U.S. to come here to quickly understand Asia.

But it's challenging for the Asian people to come to Hawai'i to understand the U.S. unless they come here with some kind of a co-operative project in mind, on Asia.

Otherwise, research-wise maybe the East-West Center is not the best place to just come here to learn the U.S., because we are not focusing on the U.S. ourselves, we are focused on Asia. So if there is an issue concerning Japan, China, individual countries like that --

then we have a lot of advantages. This is always the case, you know.

We are not, we are not solely focused on the U.S. The only thing is, if we can continue to attract people from the U.S. coming here, then we'll increase the chance of Asian people coming to interact. If we understand the issue well, I think we can benefit from it and try to avoid the disadvantages. A disadvantage is that people know more, people know better, people can fly to Washington, D.C., to get to know the U.S. Those are the things that we have to deal with. But the benefit is we also understand Asia better, and through all these information technologies we can serve their needs better.

EWC Mission

And that's our whole purpose, right? I mean, from the very beginning the Center was established to exchange -- to promote exchange between Asia and the U.S., and also to try to help Asians lift their living standards. So if Asia develops, that's the whole purpose from the beginning, right? You don't necessarily want Asian people to look to the U.S. as above them as an advanced country. They also advance themselves to have a better life... Which also means that the theme of the research has to be changing, and evolving to see how rather than obviously helping Asia, now both can learn from each other. Because when Asia develops, they are going to develop some of the same problems the U.S. faces.

For instance, when you develop fast and globalize, as we always promoted -- then you could be hit by the financial crisis, minutes after it broke out in the U.S. You cannot be insulated from the problem. And then the U.S. has a lot of things you can learn from. And even the U.S. can learn from the crisis in Asia. So, rather than helping Asians, now

we are helping each other. (laughter)

And really learning from each other. That seems to be the case.

Best Memories

I do have a lot of very, very fond memories. I'm still here. And even that, I -- you know, personally, I think I have a strong, kind of, emotional attachment with the Center, because it did change my life... a lot! I think without Seiji Naya's letter at the beginning, I couldn't have come out of China to study for my master's and Ph.D. Today, kids in China, or other countries, they have more resources to rely on if you want to study abroad. But at that time, telephone and telegraph were the common ways of communication. I used to have to call, collect call sometimes, and it's so expensive. And telegraph is the way you could send messages in the mid-'80s.

When I was a student, I lived in Hale Manoa and I served on a student committee. I was the chairman of the students -- Chinese Students Association, and also served on the EWC committee. I think that the Center changed my life, you know, completely. Even today, you know, EWC is part of my life.

Like many other long-termers, old-timers at the East-West Center, it changed my life in many, many ways. I assumed many different positions at East-West Center as a student, as a visiting scholar, and now as a staff.

I came to the U.S. at the age of 20. And I've spent more than half of my life in the U.S. More than in China now. And that more than half of my life is entirely with the East-West Center.

So I think that there are many, many good memories. The [EWC] International Fairs. I was in charge of organizing and driving the shuttle service to Star Market for a year.

Even after I left Hale Manoa -- it's probably more specific to the program, the Energy Program. The people that you know -- I think there were many happy moments. The parties, the welcoming parties and the farewell parties for people. Fereidun's birthday party. That was probably one of the most recent, 2003. And it's all the conferences, the same people. So it's part of my life with many high times.

EWC's Impact on Personal Life, Career

I'm very proud when I go to Asia, my country of birth China, to say that I am who I am. It's very, very interesting. It's nothing against Hawai'i -- I've lived here 20 plus years -- when I say, "I'm from Hawai'i," the reaction is, "Wow!" Well, you know, the "Wow!" can have different meanings: "Such a beautiful place, paradise" or it could mean "Such an isolated place, so far away from the U.S. mainland. How could you be there?" But when you mention East-West Center, you earn respect. "Oh, I understand why you stay there, because of East-West Center."

Sometimes you can only feel it personally.

I'm probably different from some other people who actually returned to China, or returned to their country. I did not do that. I found my job and stayed in Hawai'i instead. After I came to Hawai'i over 20 years ago, I never stayed more than three months in China at one time. So, if we only talk about the people back home, or back in Asia, I don't have experience to say that when I stayed there, more people know East-West Center. But through my contacts with people, for the people who come here -- part of the reason they come here is because of my presence. It's kind of trickle down. I do feel that as a person I did influence a few people about how they see the Center.

I did go there [*Asia*] all the time representing the Center, I think the East-West Center

does have a very good name brand in Asia.

I just want to publish more books under my name, and probably do something to promote understanding between U.S. and China, and between U.S. and Asia. I've been busy for all these many years, but I really want to do something one day, if I can find some quiet time to do some teaching, and to do a sabbatical leave. I've never done a sabbatical leave. The structure of East-West Center doesn't include sabbatical leaves.

All my life is at East-West Center, to be honest, at least since I become a researcher.

Travel, I did a lot. But if I could work in a different place -- not necessarily leaving the Center -- well, leaving the Center is an option too, right? It's a possibility, but what I'm saying is, maybe I've been with the Center maybe for too long. (laughter)

Maybe take a break to do something in a different place. The place I can think of could be Washington, D.C., it's right in the heart of politics and security. Or in a place like Singapore, where both languages of English and Chinese work well. At least English is the number one language, and you have no problem.

Or in China, like you said, teaching while doing research. Australia maybe, yes. So, I think more publications and maybe a long visiting position or a changing of positions -- and playing a little role in energy research and organizing a bigger network of people that I can be associated with or even direct that can achieve a bigger kind of goal. I'll remain active for another 10 years for sure. (laughter)