



EAST-WEST CENTER
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EAST-WEST CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

George Ariyoshi Interview Narrative

5-21-2008 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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George Ariyoshi

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Personal Background

Statehood Strategy

I had heard about the East-West Center in 1959. You see, it goes back to Jack Burns' delegate re-election campaign in 1958, when he let Alaska become a state ahead of Hawai'i. That was a very tough thing for him to have to campaign with. We were always regarded as the 49th state, and now we became the 50th state, and he had to face a campaign between those times. He let Alaska go first, knowing that if Alaska went first, Hawai'i would follow shortly after that. The funny thing is that the [U.S.] Senate controlled by Democrats, wanted Alaska before they would take Hawai'i because they considered Alaska to be a Democrat state, and Hawai'i a Republican state.

That got reversed at some point. But I got very close to Jack Burns during the 1958 election, because I thought what he did was a very courageous thing -- to let Alaska get ahead of us, knowing that would clear the way for Hawai'i. After that happened, and during that process, he became very close to Lyndon Johnson, who was Senate Majority Leader at the time. That friendship resulted in their talking about the East-West Center, and the Center was conceived during that period when Jack Burns was very close to Lyndon Johnson.

Getting into Politics

I was in the state Senate at that time. I got involved in politics because of Jack Burns. I had no idea that I was going to become a politician, until one day, in early September 1954, a friend of mine told me, "I want you to come to a meeting with me at the Nuuanu

YMCA." We went there, and I was introduced to Jack Burns, who was then chairman of the Democratic Party [*of Hawai'i*]. Jack Burns started to ask me all kinds of questions about my growing up, living in Hawai'i -- what kind of life I had, whether I was familiar with the plantations.

I'm not a child of the plantations. So I didn't experience some of the problems that the plantation people had: the problems between the owners, the foremen and the workers there. I worked, and went to school with, played and got along with, and sometimes fought with -- boys of all different backgrounds. I never encountered discrimination as a youngster.

Then he asked me, "Oh, now that you're back practicing law, and working, how do you feel?" I had seen a great disparity between those who are with the group that's in, and those that are outside. It was not racial, but it was the Big Five [*sugar companies Alexander & Baldwin, Amfac, C. Brewer & Co., Castle & Cooke, Theo H. Davies & Co.*] that controlled the whole economy. They dictated everything that happened in this community, so much that even when Henry Kaiser -- as big as Henry Kaiser was -- when he tried to come to Hawai'i, there were great concerns on the part of the Big Five about him coming here.

And I told Jack Burns that primarily what I saw was inequality in this community. I told him that everything depends on who you know. And if you're in the right group, you get up -- you get along. If you're not, then you're outside. And I told him I don't want to live in a community like that. I want to live in a community where if I'm better than somebody else, I win. If somebody else is better than me, that person wins. That's the kind of community I want to live in. And then he told me, "Run for office."

I thought he was talking to somebody else. And I turned around, and he said, "No, you. Run for office." I told him, "I'm too young. I've only been back from school for a little while, and nobody knows me." And he told me, "Nope, that's not it. It's where the heart is." And he said, "This election, there will be some other new people getting involved, so you run."

It was only three days till the filing deadline, and only 33 days before the primary election. Currently we have 35 or 36 House districts on Oahu, but at that time we had only two House districts. And my district, the 5th District, that I was going to run in, stretched from Nuuanu Avenue all the way out to Aiea, Pearl City, Waipahu, Waianae, Nanakuli, Wahiawa, Kahuku, Waiahole, Kaneohe, and back to Nuuanu.

I didn't make the decision to run that day.

But the person who came with me, Tom Ebesu, who became my campaign manager and my best man at my wedding, came back the next day and said, "Let's go file." He had the nomination petitions all filled, all the necessary signatures. "Tom," I said, "This is a big step for me. It is so sudden and I'm not ready to make the decision now." So he said, "Let's go talk," and we went to Ala Moana Park. We sat on a wall there, and we talked about Hawai'i as it was when we were growing up. We talked about Hawai'i then and what its future could be. And when we got through, after about three hours, he said, "Okay, let's go file." I said, "No, Tom. Tomorrow." (laughter)

And I put it off until the last day. So he came back and we went down in the afternoon to file, and I became a candidate, with only 30 days remaining before the election; only 30 days to organize the campaign, to get all the election material out -- printing banners and

posters and cards – and putting together a campaign organization. Tom Ebesu went to Farrington High School, and I went to McKinley; he got all his Farrington grads out, I got all my McKinley classmates out, and our organization, which we put together, was bigger than all the rest of the other candidates in my district, put together.

We had manpower, but we didn't know what to do. We had all the Indians, but we didn't know how to campaign (laughter). But we were very lucky. We were very successful in the primary. There were concerns expressed by some of the labor unions, the ILWU [*International Longshore and Warehouse Union*] in particular, which at that time were very strong in my House districts that included the plantations in Aiea, Pearl City, Wahiawa, Waialua, Waipahu, Kahuku and Ewa. They were concerned about me doing so well in the primary.

We had 13 candidates, six to be nominated and I came in third.

They became very concerned that a young person was doing so well without having gotten too much involved with them, and they gave me a bad time. At a candidates' meeting on Monday following the Saturday primary election they began to tell me how we were going to campaign -- what material I could pass out and what I couldn't pass out. And that dispute, continued for about a week and a half, almost two weeks. There were only about four weeks between the primary and the general elections. But I finally put my foot down. I told them that I was going my way, and I was going to print my own brochures. They told me, "No individual brochures, only one team brochure," and I told them, "Look, you put six pictures on there, and one brand new face, nobody's going to look at or remember the new face." And so I said, "I have manpower, people who are ready to go out," and they finally -- two weeks after the primary -- they finally told me,

"Okay, we'll make an agreement. You go ahead; this next week, you go ahead and do all of that, but the last week: no individual campaign material." (laughter)

I agreed. The other candidates, who were the old-timers, at least some of them, did not keep their commitments.

But I made a commitment, and I was going to honor that commitment. Even on Election Day, when we were not supposed to have individual cards, my uncle was in the Kaneohe area passing out the team brochure. And he told me, "Look at what other people are doing." I said, "Never mind. I have an agreement and I'm going to abide by it." And we did. And we were lucky. I came through strongly in the general election. That 1954 election was historic – the first time Democrats took control of the legislature in the 54-year history of Hawai`i and I was the youngest of that group.

Then after the election, I began to feel that everything happened so suddenly I was not prepared to serve. And I started to then ask myself, "Hey, now that I got elected, and have this power, what am I going to do?" (laughter)

I didn't have to give up practicing law for politics because the legislature was a part-time legislature, met only two months every other year. So I could go back to my law practice. But a bigger problem for me was: What am I going to do with this job that I have? And I told Jeannie [*Mrs. Jean Ariyoshi*], "Let's go some place and let's just be alone, and I want to think about what I want to do." I thought about "fairness." This whole idea of fairness: If we can have a fair community -- if everybody can be treated equally based upon their ability -- that would take care of many problems and bring about the change that I wanted.

But the next question was: How do I do that? Do I take away what those who are in

power now have and transfer that to other people -- and those people mostly would be the ones that support us? I thought about that, and I said, "No, then I'll be doing the same thing that they were doing to us." So I decided that the only way that we could make it work was to create more opportunities: more opportunities so that more people can participate, and be sure that as we move forward everybody understand that the fairness part becomes very important.

Well, let me tell you one other story.

When we had this fairness theme, I was elected in 1954. I went through only two *[Territorial Legislature]* sessions -- one session every two years: 1955 session, 1957 session -- before the statehood election. And with that statehood election, in 1959, it was the first time that we had an elected governor, Bill Quinn, a Republican, and the first time during that period -- since I started in '54 -- that the Republicans took control of one house, the Senate. And they took control by a vote of 14 to 11 -- 11 Democrats and 14 Republicans.

Bill Quinn sent down the name of a judiciary appointment, Sam King, for Senate confirmation. Sam King had campaigned against Dan Inouye in the Fourth District. He was the chairman of the Republican Party and a very outspoken person. When his name came down, there were two Republicans who could not support him. So of the 14 Republicans, two would not support him, so he only had 12 votes. Our Democrat caucus of 11, caucused, and started talking about, "Oh, if we can all stick together, 11 of us stick together, and we get the other two joining us, we can dump the governor's nominee." And we talked like that for about an hour. And then finally I said, "I have one question. What kind of judge would Sam King make?" And they said, "Oh, we think he'll be a

very fine judge, but that's not the issue." I told them, "What? Isn't the issue our confirmation of a person who would make a good judge?" The response was, "No, it's politics now. We have an opportunity to really stick together, and with the two Republicans we can really embarrass the administration."

And so I asked them, "Well, what about the individual? What do we do to that individual? What about his wife, his family? How do we explain to them that this is all political?" And they said, "Well, that's the way it is -- they understand." I said, "We can make this very political, or we can talk about principles, about fairness and equality, and how we believe so strongly in the principle of equality that we are willing to take someone who is not part of our group -- not our friend -- and support him, and make him become a judge." They disagreed.

So I told them, "Well, I'm sorry, that's the position I'm taking," and I walked out of the caucus. I called Sam King right away, and told him I was voting for his confirmation, and he told me, "Oh, that's the vote I needed. Thank you very much."

But anyway, I just felt very strongly that being fair does not mean to be fair only to your friends, those on your side. Being fair means being fair to everybody, and that means that you've got to be fair to those who are not part of your group or sometimes against or not with you. And to me, that's the test of fairness.

I had spent a great deal of time thinking about becoming a candidate, and the time I spent at Ala Moana, talking to Tom Ebesu, about what kind of things I felt to be very wrong. And because I was motivated to run for office because of the concept of wanting to have, to live in, a community that's fair -- that's what stuck with me.

And even when I became governor, I had a chance to test it, in 1982, when President

Reagan was president.

We receive in Hawai'i [*Federal*] Impact Aid for Education. Because of military/federal families here, we get special funding money for schools turned over to us for that purpose. When Reagan became president and was inaugurated in 1981, January, he talked about taking away education funds from the states, not giving them as much money as they had: letting the states do their own things. And in Hawai'i, one of the things that they talked about was this Impact Aid for Education.

The legislature became very concerned about this, and said, "We can't lose these educational funds; we've got to find a way to prevent it." And they introduced a measure saying that any person who was part of a federal family -- military, federal government employees, and so forth -- their children, in order to go to public schools, must pay tuition if the Impact Aid did not come. When that was going through the legislature, I thought it was a big joke. I thought they were trying to send a message to Washington. But it moved along very rapidly, and it passed both houses and came up to me for my signature.

As soon as it came to me, I let it be known that I was going to veto the measure, and it had proponents. [*State Senator*] Neil Abercrombie was a very strong proponent of it, and so was John Radcliffe, the head of the teachers' union. The two of them came to me and begged me not to veto the measure, and I told them, no, I was going to veto it, because I did not think that we were being fair to all those kids. And they told me, "Oh, but this is not against the kids, this is against the president." Then I said, "But who gets impacted? We're talking about you using the children to try to get at the president." Those children did not ask to be born to a federal family. They had no choice about coming to Hawai'i.

And I told them, "You know, we live in a community that's fair and I want everybody to be treated fairly, and what kind of message do we send our children if we are going to discriminate between those who are federal and those who are not?" And they told me, "But they [*military/federal employees*] don't vote -- most of them don't vote." I said, "That's not the issue. And it's not whether they're our friends or not." That's when I told them, "Being fair means you've got to be fair to everybody; even if they're your enemies, you've got to be fair. That's the right thing to do. If we started to do this, we could find a way to discriminate against any other group." And so I vetoed the measure right away. That's how strongly I felt about the fairness issue.

Establishing the EWC

So when the Center came up for discussion, I always felt very strongly about the need -- because of my Asian background too, I guess -- about the need for us to be able to reach across the Pacific. Most of the activities had been across the Atlantic. And even in trade, this side was very greatly outnumbered by the amount of trade activities that were taking place on the other side. So I saw the East-West Center as a really good idea. It was not my idea, by the way, to create it. It was Jack Burns' and Lyndon Johnson's.

But once they decided they would create it, I really was very happy to have a Center like this where we can bring all people together, and we can have exchange, and people can learn to live together -- to find out what the other person is doing, why do they think that way -- and be able to make that kind of collaboration. And to me that's what the East-West Center provided at that time. And so I was very pleased to have it become reality.

East-West Center Incorporation, 1975

I pushed for the incorporation [*establishment of the East-West Center as a Hawai'i-incorporated 501(c)(3)*] when I became governor, and there were several reasons for my doing that. Number one: [*before incorporation*] the federal funds were controlled by the State Department, and even if they came to the University, the University was going to very likely just go along with whatever the State Department wanted, which meant that this Center could become a propaganda arm for the State Department, and I did not want to see that happen. I did not feel that was going to be good for the Center; it was not going to be good for the programs. You know, people are not going to really believe in what the Center is, if it became that kind of propaganda arm, or was even perceived to be so.

I felt that the best way for us to avoid that was to have the Center become incorporated. I couldn't incorporate under federal laws, but the only thing I could do was incorporate under Hawai'i laws. In that incorporation process I wanted a board of directors that would be more than just Hawai'i and the United States. I wanted an international group as board of directors.

I went to Washington. We negotiated with the State Department. We had a hard time having them understand that. I insisted that if we were going to incorporate, we had to have a board that was composed of outside directors also. To my surprise, they disagreed at the beginning, but then they decided that they would do it. I did not expect them to come along with five [Board] members, but I was so surprised in one of our negotiations when we started talking, they went and said, "OK, we'll go along with five international members."

And so it became five Hawai'i *[appointed Board Members]*, five State Department *[appointed Board Members]*, and the 10 selecting the five foreign directors. That's one of the reasons why I wanted to have it set up like that, and I wanted that set up so that nobody can control the Center except the Board of Directors *[Governors]*.

The relationship with the University was very important, because we shouldn't reinvent the wheel and establish classes just for the Center -- not enough students. We couldn't provide those kinds of educational opportunities. So the use of the University, for the students to study, and take whatever courses they want, became very important. But the University would not control the Center; it was the Board that was in control of the Center's mission. We contracted with the University, paying for their services, so that the people who come to the Center would get quality education.

The five outside foreign directors -- Board members -- sit together with us and we discuss things that happen internationally, and they have a chance to participate in the decisions that we make.

Board of Governors

{Editor's note: Upon election as governor in 1974, Ariyoshi appointed Mary Bitterman, Kenneth Char, Herbert Cornuelle, Edgar R. Kaiser and Russell Okata to the EWC Board of Governors.}

I wanted the Board to be a very substantive Board. I wanted them to not be afraid to make decisions, the right decisions. That's what I wanted, and I think that's what good people do. They don't want to be associated with something -- an institution -- which is not good, and make decisions that they can't stand behind, that they would be embarrassed about. And so I wanted good, quality people to be there so that they can

provide that kind of support and background.

It's good to have some international context out there, to have some understanding of the importance of the region -- a person who is very open in their minds and is willing to listen to experts who can provide them with the right kind of direction. And for that purpose I think it's very important to have, the right kind of leadership.

Life at EWC

Reduction-in-Force/ Reorganization Mid-'90s

You know, when I accepted the seat on the Board at a time when the funding was going low, and the federal government was having great difficulties, I looked at what was happening at the Center the first year I was on the Board, and I saw the funding being cut back. At one time it was at \$27 million, \$24 million, \$17 million, \$14 million, you know, \$12 million: really coming down.

When I saw that happening, I looked at where the cuts were being made. What was happening at the Center at that time was that when the funds came down, they cut wherever they had to cut in order to live within the resources that were available. The easiest place to cut is the programs. You keep all the staff because they're there, so you minimize the cuts there, and you cut the programs, and you maintain the system.

But I felt that we would not be fulfilling our mission if we did that. Whatever the amount was, we had to be sure that within that funding level we are able to perform our mission.

What's our mission? To try to get better understanding between the people of the Pacific and Asia. Our mission was to try to get the appropriate kind of research, to help build communities out there. And so we tried to do all these things at that particular time. We also had to get the right kind of leader to do this. I want to talk a little bit more about

that.

So we felt we had to refocus, and we ought to ask the question, "What's the Center all about?" When I first went to the Board and asked, "What's the Center all about?" you got all kinds of answers. I felt we had to really refocus and really know – really understand - - what it is that our mission was. And so we went through all of that, and we developed our own understanding of what we considered to be important -- the mission of the Center -- which was to bring about cultural exchange: people living together, coming together, sharing their own ideas with each other, talking about some of the issues that are important, understanding why somebody thinks differently from them, and understanding the basis for those kind of differences.

Maybe it's cultural, maybe it's economic, maybe some other things exist that bear upon the particular issue that is being considered. That's how you begin to get understanding -- a better feeling for the other person, understand the other person, understand why they think a certain way, understand why they come to certain conclusions. And so that's one of the things we tried to do.

We talked about the importance of the research, of knowing what is happening. And so the research was also continued. But the research at that time was compartmentalized. You had population research, energy, all kinds of research. Economics research. But our feeling was that research does not fall that neatly into one category. What may be a population issue can be an energy or other issue.

And so we eliminated the many compartments and we made it one research center, so that we can concentrate on doing the research that's necessary, and go beyond the areas and take up related issues also.

In that effort, in the research, our feeling was that you've got to help build communities, and to help build communities you need to go out into the community and to get people who have some of these research talents, and utilize their talents so that you can get the help to develop the kind of expertise out there.

In addition to that, I felt it was very wrong for us to have people sitting in the Manoa office and doing all the research about what's happening out there in the field. Even though they take frequent trips from time to time, you needed somebody, some people, who were going to be affected by the research. And so we insisted that the researchers spend a lot of time going to the communities, but also taking some of the people who are out there and having them involved in the research project.

So our research program became very different from what it had been. That's part of community building, to develop talent in the region for future leadership.

On reorganization, we decided that if we cut elsewhere, we've got to look at our own staff, too, and so we reorganized. It was very painful to do that, but we all reorganized, and we looked at what was necessary for us to do, what was achievable, and what we didn't have to do, what we could forego.

Selecting a New President

In that process, also, we had to reorganize leadership. I mentioned that we were talking about meeting our expenses, living within our means, and that's what had been happening. And because of our need for reorganization, we felt that we needed somebody who could do a better job, who had an understanding: a scholar in the field, in the Asian areas, someone who understood the region better.

Charles [*Morrison*] had been on the staff for a long time. He understood the Center and

its role, and sometimes we overlook that and look for big credentials that others may have. I think particularly in a place like Hawai'i, we have a tendency of not looking at who we have here; we always look outside to see whether we can get somebody with a big name out there.

That's almost like an inferiority complex: Someone on the outside is better than what we have here. But to me, it's not whether somebody has a big name, it's whether that person is going to work for the institution, be innovative and creative in finding a way to make that institution become really outstanding; and it doesn't take somebody with a big name outside.

In fact, you can do it better if you have a person who is already here, has great feeling for the community, and understands what has to be done. Charles fit that bill, and that's why we had Charles become the President of the Center [1998].

Board of Governors

When I was the Board chairman, I wanted to be sure that all Board members really participated, and felt strongly about the mission of the Center. And I was very pleased to see that. Participating in policy development but not interfering with management of the Center

Programs and Priorities

When you cut, it's very easy to cut the student program. But Charles and I talked about it, and we said, "What's the Center if you don't have students? How are you going to have the cultural and international exchange?" And so we decided we wanted to have more students, and build that up, and that's when we met with Mr. Freeman [*Freeman Foundation*].

We had dinner -- Charles and I had dinner with them, the two of them [*Houghton "Buck" and Doreen Freeman*]. We talked about the Center and how the cutbacks had been made on the student program, and how important it was for us to get that back up. And I'm so grateful to Mr. Freeman when he committed after that, when he called and said, "I'm going to give you \$4 million."

[*Editor's note: Ariyoshi was asked if this was why the Ariyoshi Scholarship was established.*] Well, it was the work of some of my friends who did that, who felt that they wanted to do something to support the Center.

[*Editor's note: During that period the Board drew up a Strategic Action Plan for the 21st Century.*] Well, basically what we wanted to see was the whole state, everybody, becoming more involved. That's what I felt when I came on the Board. We started those dinners [*East-West Center Foundation annual dinners*], and we'd never had the fundraising dinners before that. And I wanted the dinner because I felt that it's time for the community in Hawai'i to participate and to be supportive of the Center.

And the numbers that came out started to grow every year, and we've had great support for the fundraising dinners. But that's what I wanted primarily: that I wanted the people to appreciate what the Center was all about; that we had this gem here that they had to support in order to make it possible for us to go outside of Hawai'i to ask for external support. And so my feeling was, before we go out and ask for support, we in Hawai'i must provide this kind of support to the Center.

Now the Center provides student programs and the Jefferson Fellows Program that are very important. When a person writes in a newspaper, a journalist, they reach so many people. When they write about something that's happening in Asia, and if they don't

understand and don't have the right kind of background, the writing is going to be skewed. It will distort what really is happening in Asia.

My hope also was that not only the writing, but that they personally would be affected. As individuals, they would be affected by what they see out there and how people get together and get along. My hope was that when they saw that, in their own ways they would write about things that would become more supportive of the Center and its mission. So that was one of the reasons why I felt the Jefferson Fellows program was very important.

We had the Young Leaders program [*New Generation Seminar*] that made it possible for people to come to Hawai'i, talk and meet, and dine with people from different parts of Asia. In many cases, this is the first time they get to really sit down and talk, and are able to understand what other people do, why they do those things the way they do, what they think of us, and so on. By us I mean, for example, several Japanese people thinking about somebody in Malaysia. What do they do? Why do they do that? What is the reason for coming to that kind of decision? And we begin to understand what they think of us, and they have a chance to explain their thoughts, their role, to others. So we really can provide this amongst the leaders, a better understanding, a better feeling that never existed before. And so that program, for me, is a very important program that also has developed.

So I felt that we were out there with an institution that provided many opportunities. I told Charles, "Charles, you know, you've got to make it a point for every group that comes through Asia -- important groups coming out of Congress and Washington -- you should get them to stop here in Hawai'i, and use the lure of Hawai'i as a nice place to

spend some time here. You should take the time to tell them, to brief them, on some of the things in Asia." I said, "I know they get briefings in Asia, but who briefs them? The briefing comes from a group of people from the State Department who have a point of view and who have a bias, and they want people to go and see a certain side." So I told him, "What we do, we don't have a bias. We want them to have the truth. We want them to have the best understanding of what exists out there, and this is a Center that can provide that kind of opportunity. And every group that goes to China or Asia should have an opportunity to come to the East-West Center." And Charles developed that to a large extent.

East-West Center in Washington

But in order to do that we had to have something in Asia and in Washington, and Charles and I talked about it. We said we could do so many good things. We sent periodicals and we sent magazines and books out there, but that's not enough. We have all this knowledge here, why should we not impart some of this to the people, to our leaders, in Washington?

By doing that, number one: we can insure that they're going to become more supportive of funding. It's not just that, but it's very important to have our leaders properly informed -- the real information, not what somebody wants them to know so that they can be biased and come to a different, a certain conclusion.

And that was why we started the [EWC] Washington office. I think we were very fortunate, at that time, in having Muthiah [Alagappa], and he was the right person there. And Muthiah, because of the kind of person he was, he had a lot of credibility, and so he represented the Center well. During the time that I was on the Board, I had several

occasions to go to Washington on different matters, and I was very pleased with the reach of our Washington office and the things that they were doing. I've not kept track of the last five years or so, and I don't know what's happened since then, but during the time that I was on the Board, and during the time Muthiah was in Washington, I felt that we were really reaching the right kind of people.

EWCA Represented on Board

I want to note also that we had over 44,000 people [*alumni*] who had come through the Center. I felt it was important to get them refocused on the Center's mission. If they felt good about the opportunities they had to enhance personal and cultural exchange, why shouldn't they be similarly involved, even after many years later?

To bring the alums back into a closer relationship with the Center, I had the head of the Alumni Association attend Board meetings, sit with us, participate in every way that a Board member could, except that I couldn't give that person a vote. But that person could ask questions and speak on any issue. This resulted in a much closer relationship and also resulted in greater financial support for the Center.

Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP)

The PIDP [*Pacific Islands Development Program*] came about because, I think it was the year 1979 or '80 -- I looked at the Pacific Islands territory leaders -- the governors of Guam, Saipan, American Samoa -- and they were part of our American government. They went to the governors' conference, and I heard them being very critical of the United States, of things that were happening. And I decided that we should take the lead and get them together, find out ahead of time, find out the things that are bothering them, and see if we can help them to get the things that they needed

And so my first meeting, which we had here in Hawai‘i, I met with them for breakfast. And in the morning we took time to look at all of the things that they were very concerned about. "What is it you're complaining about? What are you going to complain about when the meeting gets started?" And we got it all out. And I told them, "Look, on that political issue we'll help you. We'll get our congressional delegation to talk to other senators and congressmen to work with you to help you out." Some of their problems were with the Interior Secretary, with the Interior Department. And that's how I got the Pacific Islands Development Program -- PIDP -- started amongst the governors. From there, I looked at what was happening with other island leaders. And I began to feel the same kind of thing: If you can bring them together, you can find a way for them to talk about their problems, you can find a way for us to provide some expertise to help them solve some of those problems. That's how we got that started.

Initiatives as Governor of Hawai‘i

Western Governors' Association

Now just about that time, also, I chaired the Western Governors' Association [1984], and we had two compacts. We started the Western Governors' Association first, and later on they wanted a more organized, working group of Western Governors. I was chairman of the Western Governors' Association and when they formed the new Governors' Association, they asked me to chair that group also. I chaired it at a time when there were great concerns about Japan's economy, and about Japan. Americans began to feel, "Gee, Japan might become the number one economy" -- pass our, America's, economy. I felt very strongly that we were in that kind of situation because Americans -- business people -- were not looking beyond America. They were very comfortably looking at

what was happening in their own community. And I felt it was important that the governors of the Western Governors' Association especially look into the Pacific, and at that time look into Japan, and see what kind of arrangement they can make to increase the sale of American companies', countries', and states' products into the market out there. My staff came to me on the second day and told me, "Oh, you know, some of the governors are talking about you being Japanese-American, and because you are Japanese-American you have a strong bias for Japan, and some of the things that you're recommending are coming out of that bias."

So my first meeting in the morning, I indicated to them that I had heard the kind of talk that was going on, and I was not interested in who started those conversations. I was more interested in what needs to be done. I told them about the economic growth that was taking place in Asia and the Pacific, and that Japan may be surpassing America's economy.

I asked, "Why are we being left out? Why are you people not encouraging the business people in your state to participate and become part of that activity? It will be very good for your constituents to be able to do that." And I told them some American policies are wrong, that make it difficult for American businesses.

That's some of the things that I talked about: What we need to do to make the future better. I used the example of my children. I said, "I love my children very much. I would do anything for them. I want to help them to develop and become good citizens in this nation of ours. If I'm going to do that, I'm not going to gloss over things that they are doing wrong. If they're doing something wrong, they should change. I'm going to tell them this is not what they should be doing. And unless I am willing to do that, I'm not

going to help them to change for the better. I feel the same way about my country. I love my country. I want my country to do the things that are right so that the country can get better. And just because it's my country, I'm not going to avoid saying that something's wrong. We need to find out what's wrong. We need to fix it. Then we can become better."

And so when I made that talk to the governors, they all began to feel, "Gee, Governor, we're so glad you've said this -- we agree with you. We think that's the right thing to do, but we didn't see it that way." And so they all told me that they were very happy that they had that morning conversation. I was also tied up with the American Western State Governors and the whole Pacific Basin National Leaders group.

Establishing PICHTR

Now I formed PICHTR, the Pacific International Center for High Technology Research, in 1986. I wanted PICHTR to help the Pacific Island nations. When I first met with them, they were talking about, "We don't want high tech, we don't need it." I said to them, "No, it's not high tech, it's appropriate tech."

"Whatever technology that you can use, we want to help you do that," but they were very negative on it.

I had many, many meetings with them, and at meetings we talked about what it was that I really wanted to do. And ultimately they began to understand. I had Dr. *[Fujiio]* Matsuda *[president of the University of Hawai'i]* go out, Doris Ching, with the University *[College of Education]*, go out, and every time they went out, they talked about the things that I was trying to do. Ultimately I came down to tell them, "It's not high technology. It's appropriate technology. Whatever it is, technology that's appropriate for you, that can

be helpful, that's what I want PICHTR to do for you. But in order for you to know what's possible you've got to know what these options are, and that's also what I want PICHTR to do: present some of the options to you."

And so at the meeting of this PIDP, in the Cook Islands, in 1985, all of the leaders of the countries around the table, told me, "Governor, we want to thank you very much. You didn't have to do this for us; you're the governor of Hawai'i. But you cared so much about us that you took the time to work on PICHTR, and we want to support PICHTR now. We want PICHTR to become very successful, and we're behind it, and we thank you very much." Every leader repeated the same thing.

And the State Department, the person who became the ambassador to Korea, he was very close with Vice President Bush at that time, and he came up to me and told me, "Wow, I've never attended a meeting like this where the leaders were expressing gratitude to one individual like they have here." He said, "We're just going to sit back. We're not going to get involved. You're going to carry the ball for us." And that's how PICHTR got started.

The first project was an education project in Tonga and involved how to use some of the technology that they have out there. The king of Tonga [*Taufa'ahou Tupou IV*] was very innovative. Math in Tonga was taught using a system developed by the king. He was very much involved in technology and how to use some of the technology became very important. So we had an educational program from PICHTR, and we sent a person out there, and that person helped Tonga take some of the things that they were doing, and help in the educational process.

We've had an electricity project in Fiji, for example, helping them find appropriate ways

to get light. We take things for granted. For example, light. But out in some of those places they don't have light at night. So we talked to them about energy projects and in little ways -- nothing big has happened -- but in little ways they've become very close to PICHTR. Now, I noticed that in the last four to five years there's become a distance there, and I want to see that brought back again.

Life After EWC

Involvement in the Region

I don't think you can pick a big university and put it in the center of someplace inappropriate. That's not going to work out. But people need education, and I don't mean vocational education. I think we had that here in Hawai'i, where we put some people -- it's very convenient to shove them into vocational education. And I think we lost a lot of people because of that. But I think we have to have education that challenges that system, that makes it possible for people to rise above the ranks of where they are.

I think that's the kind of educational system that, to me, is very important and necessary. Now, I've been asked by the Asian Development Bank to come to Manila on several occasions to speak to Pacific Island leaders, government people and business leaders, to talk to them about goals, about things that they ought to become very concerned about, about over-development, economic activities. I went the first time and I talked to them, and they asked me another time to come back and talk to another group. And so I continue to be involved with them to the extent that I possibly can.

The first time I went there, the person who recommended that I be a resource person and speak there, didn't tell them I was, at that time, 80 years old. So when the program director got that and they had already asked me, and everything was all set -- I was ready

to go -- and when she saw my age, 80 years old, she thought I was going to be a decrepit person -- unable to move. And so the first meeting that we had, after the meeting was all over, she, the director, told me, "I have to tell you that I was very concerned about your age, and I thought that you were going to be a person who would not be able to communicate, and I wondered what had been thrust upon us." (laughter)

I'll tell you -- one thing I wanted to talk about -- that I felt very strongly about was that everybody was talking about urbanization. I used to go to Manila, and I used to meet with Imelda Marcos and the president [*Ferdinand Marcos*] from time to time, and they wanted to make the Philippines an industrial state. And I used to tell Imelda, "Imelda, you know, a lot of our farmers in Hawai'i, the plantation and the non-plantation farmers, are very good with their hands, working in agriculture." And I told them, "That's what you have. And why should any person in the Philippines go hungry and go without food when you have the land, and you have these people who can plant, and grow the food that's here."

"And, to me, if you're concerned about the Communists coming into the rural areas, the best way to combat that is to provide food. When people are hungry they're going to look at other places. But not when you have opportunity to farm and to grow things." So I told her that, you know, "To me, you have to look at what you are, and what you are is -- you have people who can really help you grow food and produce." They have the International Rice Research Institute; they're great producers of rice. Their agriculture is very, very good in the Philippines. And that, to me, is what they have to concentrate on. In the Pacific Island nations, many of them are beginning to look outside, to what is happening outside. In their own way, they wanted to emulate the industrial countries, the

kind of commercial activity that is happening outside. My message to them was, "Look at what you have." Let me take Hawai'i as an example. We look at our resources: nice weather, nice people, we have the aloha spirit. That's why we have tourism and nobody can take that away from us. No matter what somebody else does, we have the ingredients of a very, very good tourism base.

In the same way, you have things that you grow out here that you can grow better than somebody else can elsewhere. That's what you've got to concentrate on. You look at what you're able to do. I said, "I've heard problems of folks being concerned about young people not being able to make the transition from a rural life to a more urban life, and they get into all kinds of trouble." I said, "You shouldn't try to make that happen so fast. What you ought to do is take it very slow, and concentrate on making it possible for necessary growth to take place."

Then they [*at the ADB meetings*] talked to me about their concerns about being swept over by globalization. My response was, "Yeah, globalization is going to change many places. But, you know, there's a place for localization in this globalization effort, which means that in a local area, in your own area, you should be able to look at what you're doing, find a niche, say 'I can do this better than somebody, we can find a way to do this, and find a market to work it out.'" And I told them, "That's what the Asian Development Bank would come in to do, to help you to make commercial some of those things you can do."

Future for EWC

My hope for the East-West Center is that at some point the federal government will recognize the East-West Center as a federal program in the sense that it becomes part of

the federal government's operation. And right now it is not. Right now you have to go to the Congress. We get funded by people -- our people -- who are out there talking about getting money for the Center, and talking to the State Department about supporting it, because it is not in the [U.S.] president's budget. And so my hope is that at some point it would be recognized as an important program, and that's what I said to the Washington office, to make it become an important program of the federal government, and get budgeted within that federal budget.

[Editor's note: Ariyoshi is asked if he thinks the East-West Center could maintain the kind of autonomy he believed was necessary and made possible through incorporation.]

I don't see a contradiction. I think that you can have both. We have it set up so that it's not a propaganda arm of the State Department. It is not and it must not be perceived as being such a propaganda arm. That perception is important. The federal government should not be controlling the Center. It should remain a Center for free and open exchange of ideas and culture -- and that's good for America, too.

After I left the Governor's office, some of the leaders of Pacific Island countries came to me, complaining about not being given the recognition and courtesies accorded heads of state. They acknowledged that they were small nations but nevertheless should be given such recognition and treated as such. I agreed with them. I had attended some of their sessions and had invited them to dinners at Washington Place *[Hawai`i's governor's residence]*.

I once saw the leaders during Carter's inauguration in Washington. They were walking around, and I was on my way to the National Governors' Headquarters. I said, "Oh, what are you folks doing, what are your plans?" The response was "Oh, we're just walking

about. We're just looking to see what's going to happen." I asked, "Are you folks attending any events?" They were not so I told them, "Oh, I'm going to the National Governors' Headquarters now, and we're going to have a little food out there, would you want to come with me?" So four or five of them came along with me and that's the first time that they were acknowledged in Washington.

I think that it's important for the East-West Center to provide support and direction, and have them come under the umbrella of the East-West Center. But at the same time, they need to be told that the Center's not going to dictate to them, that within this umbrella they have the right to go ahead and act on their own, organize, make their own decisions, without having to report to us. And that's why in the organizational chart of the East-West Center, the Pacific Island Development Program is not below the president, but up alongside the president.

I think it really comes down to -- maybe the better word might be support: support, and urging them to do what they have to do. It's like not giving them fish but teaching them to fish. With my grandchildren, for example, I try to do everything I can to support them, to help them ultimately make their own decisions. My youngest grandchild, five years old, calls me, "Oh, my big toy." (laughter) I play with him, I do all kinds of things with him because they live together with us. And when he wants me I respond almost instantly -- drop whatever I'm doing, to respond to him. And I try to give him help. At the same time, I try to let him be himself, with his own ideas. And so when we talk about doing things -- playing baseball, for example -- he tells me, "Oh, you stand there, you're first base." Or, "Somebody stands here, second base." I let him do that. And that might not be the right way to do that from a technical, athletic point of view, but to me it's

important for that child to be able to think for himself, by himself, and develop his own ideas, and become creative in his own ways without somebody else trying to tell him, "That's right, that's wrong." You know? Setting forth all the directions?

And that's where I think the Pacific Island nations are. The more we can provide support, the more we can tell them, "But, you're on your own. If you need help, if you need some directions, you come back. But until then, we're not going to interfere with what you want to do to move ahead."

Ratu Mara, Prime Minister of Fiji, talked about the "Pacific Way," and he always talked about how important it was for them to do things their own way instead of having some outsider doing it another way. Because somebody comes from the outside, the cultures and the way things get done are often wrong, because they don't understand.

The same is true in Hawai'i. When people come to see me about business in Hawai'i, I tell them, "You are welcome to come and do business in Hawai'i, but remember that doing business in Hawai'i is very different from doing business on the mainland. You can bring some of your top people over to establish your company profile and national business policies, but to implement decisions, you've got to have managerial staff that are local, that understand how people think and react, and they're the ones who can make you more successful."

I was asked by Yoshiaki Tsutsumi, to head the Prince Hotel operation in Hawai'i, not on a full-time, but on a part-time basis. I had several conditions. I told him that doing business in Hawai'i is very different from doing business in Japan, and even from doing business on the mainland. If I'm going to have this responsibility, I've got to do it my way. And he told me, "Oh, by all means, you do it your way." The other condition was

personnel policy. I can hire the general managers but the general managers can't do the job themselves. They need people who are motivated and who want to do what is the very best for the hotel. To motivate them, they need to feel they are part of the organization – and that when there is an opportunity for promotion, they would be considered and not have someone brought in from the outside, unless there are compelling reasons to do so.

I was told to do it my way, so that's how I started and took over the presidency of Prince Hotel. We had some tough collective bargaining sessions with the unions, but they all knew that I cared very much for our employees, but that I also had to protect the owner's interest. We could only go so far with the resources, earnings we had. But when it was all over, I went back to them, and I told them, "I depend on you to make the hotel successful. The operations all totally depend on you. Only you can do your work well and make guests feel like they want to return." I wanted to create a sense of pride in being employees of the hotel.

EWC's Impact

I think there's been a real turn around in the Center from the days when budget cuts were taking place at the federal level. There were great concerns at that time but since Charles took over and after the refocusing and reorganization took place, staff and researchers began to feel better about the Center's mission and its priorities. I talked earlier about the programs which were given priority and changes in the way things got done. I believe this made everyone feel good about what the Center was doing. People also felt better about being able to speak up and express their thoughts on how we needed to proceed. I've gone to some cultural events, to the extent that time permitted.

I've gone to every annual dinner. The dinners are a way of getting community support for the East-West Center. You can't go outside of Hawai'i to get support if our own community is not supportive. That's why we started the dinner and we raised considerable dollars. When I see people from other countries, I try to make a point to talk to them and tell them how grateful I am that they've come to Hawai'i. My hope is that they will take their experiences that they have here, and particularly the "aloha spirit," because I think Asians are very shy -- they kind of hold themselves back. And I tell them, "The aloha spirit is good for you and that's what you ought to do. Open up, you ought to become more expressive of your feelings towards other people."

[Editor's note: Ariyoshi is asked how he would like to be remembered at the East-West Center.]

That I cared very much about the Center. That I felt very strongly about its mission -- people coming together and learning from each other, yet being able to retain their own identity, and not expecting someone to change and lose their own identity. I think that's what the Center is all about. That's my life. That's what I believe in very strongly in everything that I do.