



EAST-WEST CENTER
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EAST-WEST CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Dan Berman Interview Narrative

5-24-2006 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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Dan Berman

5-24-2006 interview in Honolulu, Hawaii

Personal Background

I was born in 1937, January 12, and I'm the son of an immigrant -- I'm second generation. My father was born in Russia of Jewish ancestry, and came to the U.S. after the pogrom of 1902.

My mother, a Catholic Ukraine, was born here, but my grandfather after 60 years here still didn't speak English. So, the family was much like *Fiddler on the Roof*.

It didn't work (laughter) in the long run, but there were four children. Essentially I was raised in one of the immigrant ghetto areas of New York City -- Lower East Side. What I recall most I guess is not having heat or hot water, and using the kerosene stoves to keep warm in the winter. It wasn't until about 1950 that they finally installed some more modern plumbing. I remember during the summers sleeping on the roof and fire escapes, ways to overcome the heat in a tenement area.

And then, you know, I identified strongly with the area. It centered between Little Italy and Chinatown and the Slavic town to the north where my grandfather lived. The area is primarily Jewish and that's my culture and humor, and all that emerged from it, even though I am myself -- being born from a Christian woman -- I'm not Jewish. I'm not considered Jewish.

They were difficult years, the '50s, post-World War II years. My father was a truck driver. My mom worked in restaurants, and usually later on as a hatcheck woman in restaurants. We experienced some of the tragedies of that kind of an area: my sister was killed, probably because of poverty, falling out of the top of a double-decker bed, hitting

her throat against furniture too close. You know, that kind of environment.

But, we survived it, and I think probably my major asset in those days was that I was an athlete and a basketball player. That was one of the major ingredients that affected my future. I played basketball in high school, but before that, I was advised by my junior high teacher to take a test for Stuyvesant High School, which is one of the premier schools -- although public in the city -- and by testing you make it. I think that was the first turning point in my life in the sense that it was no longer, “Would I go to college, but where” because 99.9 percent of the student body -- all male student body -- went to college.

80 percent Jewish in those days. Today by the way, I went to my 50th reunion. It is now 60-odd percent Asian. Quite a difference in demography over the years. (laughter)

It was a science-oriented school, so I had five and a half years of science, and all of the math. Not much attention was paid to English or to the social studies, as we would call it today, or foreign language even. They were courses you had to take in order to do the rest.

I met a group of boys at that time in the school from the upper-middle class, middle class. It kind of began to set me in a different direction than my friends from the Lower East Side. Given the times in the '50s, anybody who went to school was supposed to be an engineer. So I entered college as an engineering student. I paid for my college as a basketball player primarily.

What I think stands out are two things. One, the biggest shock was to find out that this was a Protestant country. (laughter) In my experience, very parochial, very local, I thought it was primarily Jewish, lots of Catholics and a number of Muslims -- Albanian Muslims. I don't think I met a Protestant -- a WASP -- growing up the entire time.

Second, I remember still saying “*youse*” and “*yez*”, coming out of my New York City background. I was really quite unsophisticated at that point.

Life Before EWC

Beginning to Teach

Union College changed me -- again -- I joined the fraternity, did play basketball at Union until I was injured. Graduated as a history major. Fortunately in America you can change your degree. I loved the physics and the math, but hated the engineering – so floated into history.

At Union College, there wasn't a teaching program, but you could get certified from the state. One took some psychology courses, and called them Ed. courses. And one took the philosophy course, and called it an Ed. course, and I did do student teaching. So I had a very different background than most of the trained teachers coming out of the teacher training schools in New York, and I always felt that was a blessing.

I was not corrupted (laughter) by what I should and shouldn't do. I went into teaching.

My field was primarily European history at that point in time. I started teaching in northern Westchester -- what came to be a very exclusive area -- but at the time, I didn't know the difference. I just knew it was north of the city and taught for seven years at what's called Fox Lane High School. It was a public high school with a campus-type of organization. Quite beautiful. It's during that time that New York State began to reform its curriculum. It was the first time that area studies came into view. There was a lot of National Science Foundation money put aside for both language study, and for the studying of cultures.

So in '63, I had my first experience with non-Western studies. I went to the University of Rochester on a grant to study Chinese philosophy and history.

And that really stimulated me, and also (laughter) for better or worse, I entered into the grant pathway. You know, you get one grant, and then from then on you understand the pathway to get grants. And, that's what happened.

University of Hawai'i

So the second summer I applied, and came to Hawai'i. There was a teacher's program at the University of Hawai'i. I did well, and I found out about the East-West Center and then applied for a second master's degree at that point -- I already had my master's -- was accepted, and I guess that was the next turning point in my life, coming here, in 1965.

And, one of the fortunate parts of that was that my roommate was part of what was called the TIP program at the time, the Teacher Interchange Program. He was from Japan. We had much in common, and now 40 years later, we still visit each other. Our families have been together, and it was a very fortuitous selection that got us together.

His name was Komiyama-san, Hiromitsu Komiyama. So we had a year here. I was doing well. In those days it was fairly simple. If people thought you were doing well, they would suggest you would go into a Ph.D. program and that's what I did.

South Asia Studies

My real interest was Chinese studies to begin with. At Fox Lane -- they were quite progressive -- every summer they had for the middle school and high school what they called a non-Western institute. One year was on Africa. One year was on Japan. It was a non-credit course -- and it just worked fantastically. The kids sold freedom bonds to support it in the community. So the second year, 1965, I was asked to chair and I was going to do it on China -- but New York state was heavily invested in India.

They had already set up a resource center in New Delhi, and Don and Jean Johnson and

friends of mine were going there. They said if you would do it on India, we would give you all the help you need. So I did. It was my first real contact with things Indian. We brought over 10 teachers from the “Experiment in International Living.”

We even had Joseph Campbell -- the famous professor of mythology -- who spoke. At any rate, when I came here, I spoke to Dr. (Dan) Kwok, who I had had my summer before in a course -- and said if I wanted to get a Ph.D. in Chinese studies what would it take?

He said, “Oh, 10 years of Chinese.” (laughter)

And I said, oh, thank you. I was already about 28 or so. I said “No, I don’t think I can do that.” And so I slipped into South Asian studies.

From then on, it was a love affair -- it was the best thing that ever happened to me.

At that time, there really was no Pakistani history, Bangladesh didn’t exist, Sri Lanka was not anywhere on the radar. So it was primarily Indian history, Indian philosophy, Indian anthropology, and so on, and so forth. I took Hindi and Marathi as languages, and never was very successful -- only successful enough to pass the Ph.D. exams for them you know. At any rate, that takes me to the Center. And -- I don’t even know where to begin.

Life at EWC

The 1960s

During the golden years of the ‘60s -- as you have heard over, and over again -- there were about, I guess 700 students, and Jefferson Hall was our playground.

Kennedy Theater is where we held our major events.

Lincoln Hall was a library at that point in time.

I lived in Hale Manoa and that was great. At least for the first year I lived in Hale

Manoa. Then -- what was wonderful about it was it was a time when you didn't have just a small number of people from more restricted areas. It was called [*Center for*] Cultural and Technical Interchange at that point in time, the East-West Center.

You had a lot of nurses, and people from the Pacific Islands who were not, you know, graduate degree students. You weren't surrounded with Ph.D. students and M.A.

[*students*]. It was a greater variety of student body and I think we felt we served -- the Center felt it served -- an important function at that period of time. Hotel management, and you know, different kinds of training institutes. At any rate, in my unit were an American and a Chinese, an American and a Korean -- Gary Larson, the American next door -- someone from Fiji, and so on, and so forth.

And if I can back track a minute, I think what made the East-West Center really romantic to me, is when I came in 1964 to the University of Hawai'i, for that summer institute for teachers, I was in Hale Manoa, and for some reason I was placed in the ethnomusicology grouping.

My roommate was Osamu Yamaguchi, and every night he would play the *shamisen*, or the *koto*. Next door was Bao Dai from Vietnam, pianist, and then Ted Solis, who was quite a character in those days, and so on, and so forth. I was immediately exposed to a kind of environment I had never experienced before, even in New York City.

It was exotic, and it was wonderful. And so it was one of the things that really spurred me on to reapply to the East-West Center.

Social Life

So when I came here as a graduate student, and moved into Indian studies, my friends tended to be Indian, as usually happens, only not just Indian Indians, but I fell in with a group of Fijian Indians.

They were my entertainment buddies to say the least. (laughter) And they were connected with some Samoans -- there were connections on the island in those days.

“Ewa-way” [*western side of Oahu*], there is a large Samoan community that was also connected to the students at the East-West Center. So, we’d go there for Christmas, or New Year’s holiday, and probably drink more than we should.

I don’t even remember exactly where in Ewa, but near the beach I remember.

And, (laughter) well as I said, my friends at the East-West Center took me outside of the Center into the community, especially the Samoan community, and the second year the East-West Center permitted me to live off-campus. I had an apartment that was the magnet for East-West Center, especially Indians who couldn’t stand “Saga food” in those days, and they would come, and cook at my place.

They’d come to my place to cook, and I learned how to do some Indian food with them, and you know, they didn’t just stay -- we were cooking, we couldn’t have Indian food without a few beers, you know, so, it was -- that experience, and also I had a couple of interesting experiences in those days. I remember we were asked if we would go out, and teach at various schools.

And I remember going to Nanakuli and talking about what life in New York was like --

Can you believe? (laughter)

You know, try to get the community more engaged with the East-West Center.

I had the infamous Volkswagen van that I had driven across the country, and had it here.

It became a, you know, essentially an East-West Center vehicle now. (laughter)

But my very first time, I was here maybe three days, or five, a week, or whatever, and it was Aloha Day parade, and I remember saying, “Anybody want to go see the Aloha Day parade?” It turned out to be about six Pakistanis.

I remember taking them down -- and they all had cameras -- and watching the parade, and I turned around, and they had all disappeared -- all had disappeared, totally -- and finally when I found them, they were all with their cameras snapping like crazy on the beach of Hawai'i. They had never seen (laughter), you know, a woman other than her ankles, and her hands before, and (laughter) so I said, "OK." (laughter)

That's just an example of how the world was so different. You know Pakistanis today are far more sophisticated.

We're far more sophisticated. My roommate told me stories about -- that's my Japanese roommate -- his adventures with the john, with the bathrooms and the toilets, and all of that, and all of us experience that in one way or another. So we as people-to-people learned a great, great deal, and I think more than anything, you became tolerant of difference -- really became tolerant of difference, and I think that has held me in good stead for the rest of my life.

That difference wasn't necessarily judgmental. It was just neutral, you know. Just different. And so that was very helpful.

Martin Luther King Jr., 1968

Paul White was an African-American and quite a guy. And I remember he and I would go and have a drink every now and then, and we were having a beer either in Charlie's or Kuhio Grill, one of our favorite spots -- and he said, he's the one who told me that Martin Luther King had been killed. And, I will never forget that, you know. What do you say to a black person when this happened, and I -- it was really -- it was quite a negative experience for me. Even given all of my cultural exchange experience, I couldn't handle that very well, because I felt like he did. It was a disaster. And of course, followed by the Kennedy assassination and Robert Kennedy -- I was right in the middle of taking my

exams, my thesis exams, yeah -- for all three of those actually.

Inter-Island Trip

It was myself, Bill Atwell, and Pam who was to become his wife, Doctor Sharma and Mimi -- Jagadish Sharma and Mimi -- and then about five other Indians. We went to Kauai, we went out -- I block out the name of the beach, but anyway, I almost drowned. I was body surfing, and I caught the rip current, and I was so tired I couldn't swim back. And I was tossed into a cave.

Yeah, and they came across holding their arm to arm, and they got me, and came back, and that was quite the frightening experience. I have never really gone into water over my knees since.

I remember Kuldeep Mathur saying, "You've been saved for some reason, you will do something important in this life." (laughter)

You know, there is so much that went on, when you are here for four years and the connectiveness. I being older was different also than the experience of, you know -- the Asians were my age, or many of them -- but the Americans were kids right out of college. I had already taught for seven years. So there was almost a generational gap between me, and that group you know. Even though my closest friend here was an American, a young man who became a Ming scholar, Bill Atwell.

An EWC Marriage

My years at East-West Center, of course, there was the hard study part and -- and I met my wife, the woman who was going to be my wife, on a beach in Makaha.

Elizabeth had already finished her East-West Center grant and was working for the State of Hawai'i. We met, and then were married two years later I guess -- about two years later.

Well, there had been a number [of *EWC marriages*] before. My close friend, Indian Fijian, got married down at the Church at the Crossroads, you know. So Elizabeth and I wanted to be married here, but her mother had dreamed a lifetime of a wedding in Chamberlain, South Dakota. (laughter) And so, her mother refused to come to the wedding if it was held here, so we submitted, and went to South Dakota, and were married. One East-West Center person, our maid of honor, came, Arlene Johnson -- who was part of the staff here at the time.

Birthing /Ph.D. Research, India

Elizabeth had just returned from her around the world East-West Center adventure. She had been in Indonesia. The last place in the world that she wanted to go at that time was India. She had not had a great experience as a single woman going to India in the '60s, especially during the hot summer. But, she did. She definitely went with me, and we had our child in India.

Our daughter was born in Pune, Maharashtra in 1970. It was a wonderful experience. She had a total turnaround. We had wonderful neighbors who took us through the birthing process. In India, you have special foods, and you do special things at the seventh, eighth, ninth month. You know, special *ladus* [sweetmeats made of sesame], special kinds of ceremonies. We have pictures of it -- the thought being that she will never again be as beautiful as she is now.

She, you know, was now married, will have children, and all the rest of it. So we have some absolutely wonderful pictures of her at this point in her eighth month, seventh month of pregnancy. Sitting on a half moon in some photographer's studio with this, you know, funky backdrop wearing a nine-yard sari. Saris are usually six yards, this was a regional *maratha sari*, a nine-yard sari.

Our neighbors really took wonderful care of us. The man with whom we lived in India, from whom we rented, was part of the nationalist movement, part public relations officer to Apa Pant, who eventually became the High Commissioner in London after helping [Jomo] Kenyatta in East Africa with the African independence movement. This man also, Mr. [M.S.] Shahani represented India on the Vietnam commission -- the International Vietnam Commission. He was a journalist with great experience, and we really learned a lot about India through his eyes.

You know, it was an incredible experience. He had just lost his wife, and was pretty despondent, and then we came, and he said this is good because now with new life, with the baby being born, there was new life in the house.

So we had an incredible experience. I don't know how many times we played Scrabble, and I don't think I ever beat him. (laughter)

He was a wonderful man. In the '60s, it was unusual for Indian houses to have any art whatsoever, but he had much art around the house. It was an extraordinarily pleasant place to be. He taught me an enormous amount about India.

[I was] doing my Ph.D. research, which was on the Indian national movement, the election of 1937. An inordinate experience. I was interviewing people who had been associated with Gandhi -- Gandhi's lieutenants in that region. And they were older. So I would track them down. I would travel all over Maharashtra, the Karnataka, and then Mumbai. It was a wonderful experience. Unfortunately I didn't finish my dissertation -- ABD [all-but-dissertation].

But, that's OK. I had the human experience of being in India. I must say, being raised in the Lower East Side made my life in India much easier. We bought meat hanging in a butcher shop. We saw eggs through a candle to see if they were OK. We had special

services, the person who washed -- we had wet wash -- and people delivered ice, and all of that. But most important I think coming from that area, we understood the concept, I did at least, the idea of pollution, food pollution and food protocol with the kosher idea in the background. So that was very helpful.

I remember once having a meal at a Brahmin's house, and kind of, not literally but figuratively, as we were walking out, the Brahmin priest was coming in to sanitize the house, (laughter) with prayer, of course.

So, we were there two years in India and they were a wonderful two years.

Apa Pant's daughter was one of my closest friends at the East-West Center -- Aditi Pant, and she became a marine biologist. We met her in London, and her father at that time had been transferred and had become the High Commissioner at the absolute largest embassy in the world I think, the Indian embassy or what they call the High Commission in London. We would go to the embassy every Sunday, and meet with Aditi. This was the time when the Indians were being kicked out of East Africa and so there were a lot of East African Indians that we met, and so on. And then Elizabeth became pregnant in London, and so we knew the baby was going to be born in India. So we said to Aditi, you know, our custom was -- my father had died, and you take his name, or the initial of his name to name the next child.

So it was a J. And so we said give us some J names, and she came up with "Janaki", and then some others, and then some boy's names. It turned out that "Janaki" was what we named her and she still goes by that name today. She was born on Aditi's birthday.

(laughter) So real syncretism occurred. We're still old friends.

In India I traveled a good deal. Did my research, and we came back at the end of two years -- 1969 through 1971 we were in India, and my wife and the baby left a little

earlier, and I had a little more work to do. Then the Bangladesh war -- independence war -- broke out.

So I was in Delhi with one of my Indian friends Kuldeep Mathur during that period of time. That was all so interesting.

It was the only time I ever saw real Indian civil society functioning. They had blackouts. The Indian's did the same thing: as cars drove by and people tried to use their headlights, headlights were smashed by Indians. And, the Indians really kept to the blackout, and like I said, there was really civic strength that was there that I hadn't witnessed before.

Back to UH Campus, 1971

Well, we eventually returned to Hawaii, and we were the first ones to occupy the circular dorms over there [*Hale Aloha*]. They were just being built. One had been...two had been built, and one was vacant to be occupied in September, so we housesat that dorm. (laughter)

Meanwhile I was supposedly writing my dissertation as Elizabeth was working at some computer job, and we were here for six months, and then I was offered a teaching assistantship. Jagdish Sharma was my first supervisor, and then Burton Stein became my major supervisor when he joined the faculty. At UH. And, that [*assistantship*] would have brought me about six thousand a year maybe, you know, and I was also offered a job back at the same school at Fox Lane for about 20 thousand [*dollars*]. So I said, Oh well, I'll write my dissertation there and, whatever.

Life After EWC

Teaching about Asia in New York

So we returned to New York to make a long story short, and I began another teaching career. I had already taught seven years, so I was experienced -- and the East-West

Center experience at this point, professionally, was dramatic is the only way to put it.

First of all, New York had changed somewhat so that now elective courses on a senior level were available, and I remember teaching -- everybody was teaching courses, and even though I was an old name, I was new. They wouldn't let me teach anything on India, China, at first.

I said what do you want? I said, "OK, I'll teach a course on Polynesian cultural studies" (laughter) -- and I did.

And then that lasted about a year and a half, and then I got sick, and they couldn't find a substitute obviously (laughter) to teach the course. So eventually I became involved in those courses, and began teaching about India and China -- at the student level -- and then developed courses of comparative philosophy and comparative psychology that I taught with an English teacher, and those courses were extremely successful, and I'm still getting emails about the course, would you believe, 40 years later.

These kids went to Harvard. It was aimed at kids who were either Harvard or Yale bound, and could handle reading original texts in you know, Chinese or Indian -- the [*Bhagavad*] *Gita*, Confucius classics, the Taoist -- the *Tao Te Ching*, and so on, and so forth. In high school.

The theme of the course was "How does man maximize his freedom given the power of the state, the power of tradition, and then the human condition?" And we went back and forth from Aristotle to Confucius, you know.

The kids read *Antigone*, or then we read the *Chinese Book of Songs* -- and then, the *Gita*, the rebellions against the classics like existentialist works, and so on. So it was quite a course. They had quite an education for that period of time. (laughter) Yeah.

So, that was...I felt that I had used every single course that I learned at the East-West

Center in every experience in my teaching over the 30 years that followed. I had art courses in Buddhist and Hindu arts, so that fit in.

While I was here, I was sent to the University of Pennsylvania to learn *Marathi* [language], and to take some anthropology, so I was there for a semester, and so all of that came in, and more history and political science, and so on.

I stayed in the high school the entire time. And, it turned out to be a very fortuitous choice that I made. Being a high school teacher with the academic background I had -- I was a link between the colleges and the high school through the reform movement of the '80s and '90s. So I sat on just about every council, and so on, and so forth. In 1981 I became the chair in the department, and then got involved in the politics of education in New York State. Eventually became president of the Social Studies Teachers Organization -- about 20,000 or so strong.

And in that capacity, I was appointed to a committee leading the reform movement in New York State. I feel like I was a good deal responsible for New York State now having two years of world history. I think it's the only place in the nation where that occurs. So two full years of world history and, trying to see patterns of world history and -- every school district of the regions have exams on this stuff. Of course it didn't come out exactly as I wanted it (laughter) but close enough.

In the meantime, every summer I would teach at the State University of New York at Purchase -- an economics professor, Dr. Peter Bell, and I taught a course for teachers on various regions of the world, usually combining economics and politics and some pedagogy.

So we did that for about 10 years, and that was a wonderful experience working with him, and working with other teachers. I had already been the president of the

Westchester Council of Social Studies so I had known people, people had known me – so it worked pretty well. I could follow-up then with people in the area.

So the career turned out -- I guess I'll never know whether I could have been a successful academic, but I think I was a successful practitioner of education. As a result of that work, I went to Princeton -- well, I also had a Fulbright to China first of all, in 1987, and that was a wonderful experience. Right before Tiananmen Square. And I was able -- at that time I made the comment, you know, "China's two decades behind India" -- and of course in the 1990s it went [*upward swishing sound*] because there was actually no infrastructure in China. Once you got off the tourist paths.

I spent about three months -- four months in China, and tried to learn Chinese without success. That was interesting. That was a very interesting experience. Because I then had the real -- you know living in India, living in China, had some parallels, and it was quite interesting.

Then after that, about '93 or so, I got a Woodrow Wilson grant. As they say, once you get your first grant, the others become easier and easier. Went to Princeton, and worked with 50 other teachers on developing world history curriculum, and they chose out of the 50, they chose four of us to be a team that would travel the country, and teach teachers about patterns in world history, and pedagogy, and fortunately I was one of the two males, and two females. It was a wonderful experience. I went to Chicago, Houston, no Dallas, St. Louis and Boston. It was really for about a month -- about two weeks each place.

At any rate, I guess the point is that the East-West Center experience both academically, culturally, personally, effected the next -- well, is still effecting my life -- the next 40 years of my life, and I really feel that the crucial result was a rippling effect that you can't

measure. I have probably taught 2,000 students, and probably 500 teachers and who knows where it went from there.

I know many of my students in college took courses, and someone became a Burmese scholar, and a couple in Chinese -- and so on, and so forth.

One just sent me a book. He became a philosophy teacher at a Mid-Western college, and I just got his book, and he talks about the experience of *Taoism* and other Eastern philosophies. He wrote a book on Thoreau, yeah. The course attracted, as I said, the very bright kids, and also for that period of time, kids who were bright but disillusioned, and bored with high school. There was nothing for them. They just couldn't stand school, and so that course was, as I say, exotic from their point of view. Many of them went on, not only to college, but to really do good things.

Retirement and Return to Hawai'i

I retired in 1998 after my wife and I tried every February spring vacation a different part of the country to see where we might retire to. Very methodical, and we found no place that really struck us. Anything from North Carolina, to Taos, to Sedona, to California, and just nothing struck us, and we -- oh, let's try Hawai'i.

We had not been back in 30 years and had no contact with the East-West Center during that period of time that I remember.

I didn't even know there were alumni meetings. No, it was really funny, and then they started asking for donations, so I think we did begin to give monies -- my wife, and I -- not a lot at that point, but enough.

So, we put our foot on Oahu soil, and said -- this is it. (laughter) And we looked at the other islands. My wife is, as I say, from South Dakota. She would have preferred living in Molokai. And I said, "There were more people on my block in New York than in all

of Molokai, I can't do that.” And then we looked at Maui, and half the island is given over to tourism now, so we didn't want to live there, and then Hawai‘i. The place we liked was in Hilo, but Elizabeth didn't like the thought of having to keep things dry forever. So, it actually turned out to be another inter-cultural experience. We bought a house in Laie, right in the middle of the Mormon community. Laie and that was quite an experience. We lived on the point, which turned out to be about 50/50 Mormon and non-Mormon.

But, I quickly became involved in the community organization, and within a year I was president. (laughter) And the reason for it was, we all thought it would be good since we were dealing with BYU [*Brigham Young University*] Hawai‘i's -- not influence, but the president, because we were having a problem with BYU students in excessive numbers living up on the point when the law said you should only have five students unrelated living in a house, there were 20 and 25.

There was great misuse of this, and it was affecting parking and our lifestyle and all the rest of it, and the Mormons as well as the non-Mormons were kind of upset with this -- at least some Mormons, and some non-Mormons. So it was good to have a non-Mormon face to face with the Mormon establishment, both within the church, as well as within the university, and so, I was president, and we caused a little chaos. We got a lot done. Our Mormon friends remain -- we're still -- very close to a number of them. And that was another, as they say, inter-cultural experience.

We bought a condo at the same time. So as I got involved with the East-West Center more and more, I would come in a couple days a week, and stay here, and then drive back on weekends, and so on. Yes, and it was very fortunate, because ultimately we sold the house. You know, prices changed, and we didn't have to buy something way up

there. We already had something, so we were very lucky that way.

And, the reason we changed was because it was just too much work as we got older.

A lot of driving, but mostly it was Elizabeth putting in three, four, five hours a day, you know as I said, being the South Dakota farm girl. There she was, you know, putting in fountains and tiering our back yard. She totally remodeled the house, and whatever -- putting in new kitchens -- and she just -- one day she called me, and said "Let's sell," just like that. (laughter) And it was her house essentially, you know. So I said, "I'm very happy living on concrete." It was a no-brainer for me. So we -- we are now permanently in the city.

Ties That Last

EWC Alumni activities

When we came back, I was astounded to find that our group of people that we were friends with had remained in Hawai'i all this time. Because we were very close to Benji [Bennington] and Ric Trimillos, and let's see -- Miang and Jack Reynolds, and Itsuko [Masuda Suzuki] and Mits Suzuki, and we had a group of -- Amy Agbayani of course, Lindy, you know, people who in the meantime had risen in the ranks in the University and community.

And so we had a ready-made group of friends. So we didn't have to make a great transition to Hawai'i. It was wonderful.

2000 EWC Alumni Conference

Anyway, Benji says to me, "Dan, you know, there is going to be a 2000 conference, 40th anniversary, you know. If you're interested, why don't you go, and just see what's going on." I said, "When and where?" So I come late to the meeting, and Amy is chairing the meeting, and she looks up, in the wonderful Amy style, you know, very subtle: "Who are

you and why are you here?" (laughter)

And I said, "Well, Benji told me I might be of some help with the conference." Amy:

"What experience do you have?" I said, "Well, I've run conferences at the state, local level, national level" -- "You're chairman." (laughter)

So I walk out of this conference and I would have been chair, probably, but Puongpun Sananikone, I think fearing that this outlander who he didn't know was going to make a mess of things said, "Why don't you have, Cleo Kobayashi co-chair with you." And I said fine. And Cleo and I turned out to be a great team, and we ran the conference. But at that time, Charles [*Morrison*] had just come into -- it was 1998 now -- Charles had just become president and Gale [*Awaya*] was the alumni officer.

Things were changing rapidly, and what happened was Gale, of course moved, and there was about a four-month period of time when there was no alumni officer. So Cleo and I merrily went on our way, and organized a conference. We got real great help from Vicky Shambaugh and from the Hawai'i chapter in general.

Well, as it turned out, it was only a year -- a little over a year away. And then, you know, Charles didn't know me from Adam, and so it took a little adjusting to me. But anyway, so without [*Alumni Officer*] Gordon [*Ring*], these four months, we just went on our way and made decisions that organized the conference with the wonderful help of June Kuramoto.

And the conference by all measures was a success, and we had about 800 people, and things went smoothly, thanks to Cleo and June and Noreen [*Tanouye*]. Noreen joined us at that point also. Most of the nuts and bolts they took care of.

Cleo and I were a good match. I did work with Vicky on the program, and kind of monitored, and you know, argued with Charles, and Karen [*Knudsen*] when necessary.

It turned out one of the major decisions that was made was that it would be an East-West Center/East-West Center Association conference. And every conference since has been of that ilk. Not separating out -- it used to be EWCA conference. And East-West Center would support it because it was an alumni conference.

What's significant about it is that the alumni and the East-West Center president, as well as the, to some degree, the Board had had that interruption when [Michel] Oksenberg was the president, and there was a real severance of connection between the alumni and the Center. And so, this was a *rapprochement* with the Center. Amy started the process -- she was the [alumni] president at the time, and she was a representative of the alumni on the Board of Governors at that point. That was a first.

The major significance was that it showed a unity between the two groupings. Before that, there was a severance in the relationship, and I think more importantly, it made the alumni feel closer to the East-West Center; but the East-West Center then administratively had a role, and a reason to support it. (laughter)

Gordon [Ring] came back [as alumni officer], and then he and I worked well together. Yes, he came back in 1999 at some point. Before the conference. About eight -- seven months, or six months before the conference, and he was wonderful because, you know, he and I worked very well together and he didn't try to take over immediately or do anything like that.

He wanted to see what we were doing and really look for holes that he could fill, and so on, and we never felt that he was intrusive but really helpful in the processes, and moved forward, and he's remained that way ever since. So, you know, if you do a job that's considered well done -- what happens next? You get another job, and so they asked me to be president of the Alumni Association. After Amy. Right after the conference

actually. I was given an office here. It was the first time that we [EWCA] had an office.

EWCA Alumni President 2000-05

In the spur of the moment, I said OK, and I guess spent five years as president, from around 2000 to about 2005. I think what I feel is significant about the period is that we made an inordinate number of changes with Charles' help.

And one was we got a permanent office here. I was the first president who was a full-time president in a way, because I was not working so I could put in the time, and I did put in the time. And it was really important to have an office here and to have a presence at the East-West Center. And I used it. I was kind of like a scout. I moved from department to department -- find out what was going on -- so I figure by the end of the five years, I knew as much about the East-West Center as anybody but Charles, because you know the Center tends to be fragmented into research and education, and so on. And they don't always know what's going on in the other bailiwick, and, I kind of did, because I would nose around and ask questions and all this kind of stuff. See where the alumni could fit in.

Charles and I made an agreement that I think was significant: where previously the East-West Center alumni would raise money, some of it for itself, some of it for the Center. We agreed that that was dysfunctional, and so we got a part of the budget -- the annual [EWC] budget. So we are now supported annually, and if we wish, we can work with Gordon on the budget and for the alumni overall, as well as for the EWCA. In return, the alumni raise money exclusively for the EWC. No longer locally. So that was a quid pro quo.

Charles saw the potential of alumni affairs. And I think we grew together in both trust, and in seeing the mission as a similar mission. And I still feel that way. It was a good

run. One of the first things we did -- you know the conference was held every four years and if you are going to activate people, you don't do it every four years, you try to more often. Well, maybe we over did it, and I think in 2003, we ran three [*alumni*] conferences. (laughter) Gordon and I, and a collaboration of others. We had the '60s reunion, we had ASPAC reunion, and I forget what the third one was now, ah, an Australian women's conference.

The Asian Studies Pacific -- something -- I'm not quite sure [*Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast (ASPAC) is the Pacific Rim conference of the Association for Asian Studies*]. And we've continued a relationship -- we actually hosted that conference here as well as we went to California, and supported them. And I think at the time, we had great support from the Board of Governors.

Yes, I replaced Amy as the liaison. Governor Ariyoshi wanted me to participate as an equal participant [*on the Board*]. I couldn't vote, but in every other way -- so I attended all of the meetings, and all of the rest of it. That changed with the elections of '04, and the new Board wanted to develop their own agenda. Have a relationship with the alumni and so things changed somewhat. But I think after the survey, and after the Tokyo [*alumni*] conference -- I think they have continued with the idea that the alumni are important.

The survey was of alumni attitudes toward the East-West Center, and their willingness to financially contribute, and so on, and so forth. It's a survey that we conducted for the Board essentially.

It was a radical changing of the Board, you know, with the new elections -- both at the national level, as well as in Hawai'i. So eventually you got 10 new people [*on the EWC Board of Governors*].

The survey said that 90-odd percent of the East-West Center people who replied to the survey had a life-changing experience, or close to it -- certainly positive -- and to many, life-changing. And, that they saw the role of the alumni in fiscally supporting the mission of the Center, in every way. Those who could would, those who couldn't wished they could. (laughter)

That kind of thing, and I can't even begin to tell you the kinds of things we did during those five years that changed alumni relations -- and the alumni itself.

Outreach in South Asia

In the fall of 2004, in a discussion with Karen and Charles, we recognized that South Asia had disappeared from the map of the East-West Center essentially. Very few students came. There was very little Center activity there.

So Charles asked Karen and I -- I was president of the Alumni Association but also because it was my area of expertise -- to go to the area, and to kind of see what was needed. We had a huge number of alumni there.

So Karen and I went to Bangladesh first -- and we were able to establish a chapter there with the help of the American Center -- and now that chapter stands on its own as an extremely strong chapter. One I think both of us are really proud of.

Six months after the trip with Karen, I went to Sri Lanka, and activated that chapter -- and they have been very instrumental in the tsunami relief, and then with Namji's [Steinemann] program of school to school delivering materials [AsiaPacificEd program for Schools]. And they also helped where a group of East-West Center and other people went to help with tsunami relief.

What's President Carter's program? [Habitat for Humanity] We had a big East-West Center gathering in Columbo for them -- hosted by the alumni and this group. That was

really kind of fun and wonderful. Unfortunately I was in the area. (laughter)

Back to the trip with Karen. From Bangladesh then on to India -- and Karen left me after Chennai, and had to come back, and I continued for another month in India. When we came back -- we decided at the end of the Tokyo conference -- it was decided to hold a regional conference in South Asia.

And Charles then asked if I would go back to South Asia for a lengthy period of time, and really do four or five things. One was to activate alumni. Two, to try to recruit students for the M.A. and Ph.D. programs. And three to see if we could raise money locally for scholarships. Four, was to get a series of interviews so the East-West Center would again be out there. And then five, to help in the running of the conference.

I was hired as a consultant. And I said to Charles, the word "consultant" doesn't go anywhere in India. So he devised this wonderful, wonderful title for me that really took me everywhere in South Asia. I was called, "Special Representative for South Asia, Office of the President of the East-West Center." (laughter) Anywhere. Anyplace -- You know, it got me -- It was wonderful. It was a brilliant designation. But I was, you know, essentially a consultant. The other part of it was: I got there in March, and by May it was 120 degrees.

I was absolutely "ahh!," and went through all of that -- 50, 47 degrees centigrade, at least three months of 100, and above, you know. And, it was OK. (laughter)

And so I said to them [*Charles and Karen*], "When I return -- If I'm going back -- I want to go back during the cool season, right?" So, they said OK. So I spent Christmas here and then returned January 7. It was zero degrees in New Delhi. The coldest it had been in 50 years.

So be careful what you wish for. (laughter) And we hustled around looking for heating

rods, and boy, oh, it was just like “whoa!” (gasp). I've never been colder in my life -- not even in New York in the worst of winter -- it was really funny.

I guess it turned out to be between the fall of that 2004, and when I finally returned here in 2006 -- almost a year and a half, two years of consistent contact with that part of the world. It was an incredibly wonderful experience. But at any rate, the Delhi chapter did not organize itself effectively enough to run the conference -- either financially, bureaucratically and any way -- so, I wound up spending about 70 percent of my time working on the conference and I had a wonderful assistant, Nora Michael, who has come here as APLP [*Asia Pacific Leadership Program fellow*]. (laughter)

But I did probably speak to 40, 50 vice chancellors, university faculty and students over the two-year period in Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and in Bangladesh. And never was successful in raising money.

The APLP program, I think has great potential in India and in Pakistan both. After the conference in New Delhi, in November '05, I came back, and I guess Charles and I discussed -- there wasn't the money, nor did he feel the need to send me back for any length of time -- that we had done what we had planned. We had created about five new chapters in Pakistan and in India, and he thought it was up to them now to motivate themselves.

And at the end of the Delhi conference, a Pakistani delegation volunteered to hold the second one in November of '07. Because of all of the difficulties in running the first one in New Delhi, they wanted to make sure that there was enough of a foundation to begin the process to hold this conference. And so that's when he asked if I would go -- or I volunteered to go back -- some combination thereof.

I went back primarily to Pakistan and to Bangladesh, and so far it looks like the

conference will take place. I had an incredible experience in Pakistan. Talking to just about everybody from intelligence, to foreign affairs, to university people, to commissions, and most importantly, I think we established a very firm chapter in Islamabad -- a really good chapter that's functioning with an excellent leader, so I'm optimistic. Then I went on to Bangladesh, and again the chapter is functioning beautifully. I was sent to see about the conference, as well as to see about program reps - - whether we could find program representatives -- and so I did some of that as well -- and now Karen is considering what to do. And over the whole period of time, I must have had, oh, 15 -- no, maybe not that many -- maybe 12 press interviews in languages from Urdu to Bangla.

Yes, industry, newspapers -- and you know, we had a *Times of India*, both a Delhi and Mumbai issue, and Chennai, and online issue, and so on. So, I think both the Center and I felt that we had achieved our goals with that, and I hope to go back. (laughter)

[Editor's note: Dan Berman was honored as an alumni volunteer at the EWC/EWCA International Conference in Hanoi in 2007.]

Role in Asia Pacific Leadership Program (APLP)

I know the APLP program is extraordinary -- if we can find real funding for it in South Asia, and the rest of the world. It's done well. I think it's a brilliant program. And it takes into account what the East-West Center has missed in the last couple of decades I think, and that's the real political element. We're theoreticians about society, and APLP brings people who are actually in the workforce.

It brings people who are in the workforce who have some experience -- who are middle level -- to interact with each other. Real world experiences, rather than theoretical experiences; and I think it's a brilliant concept that needs to be promoted, and in a way

the alumni had some effect on that. When Betty Buck and Gordon, and I think about a third person -- I'm not sure if it was Terry [*Bigalke*], or someone else, I'm not sure who -- came back, and they devised what they wanted to be a new program -- a sandwich program -- and the alumni said that's not what they had in mind, and that it would take away from the interchange element of the Center's program. Ultimately over time with Betty and her staff and the alumni, the APLP program emerged. At that time also -- I don't know whether or not it still continues -- the alumni was part of the hiring process. We took part in Terry's hiring I remember, and we had a role in just about every important decision that was taking place. Remember, we did have a full-time president who was here (laughter). You know, it was hard to ignore him.

At any rate. I now think that the high priority should be what Betty Buck, and those people -- maybe it was John Hawkins, was the third person -- and Gordon recommended and that's a sandwich program. I think there's a great need for collaboration with universities in Asia. They want to send their students here for six months or for a year, for specialized study. But the degrees will come from their universities or vice-a-versa -- that our people can intern there. But it takes a lot more of administrative co-ordination and collaboration than the Center feels it has staff for, and I really think that that is an important idea that should -- at least models should be developed to see how it might work and then to the degree it could be furthered.

Asia has changed. It no longer wants American expertise telling Asians what to do. Everything is collaborative in concept. There is a feeling of confidence in that part of the world -- particularly in India. I can't speak for China. I suppose in China as well. That they have gone beyond the Third World status, and that there are enough professors, enough scientists, social scientists, even American studies and literary expertise there.

That they don't need Americans telling them what to do, but they would like collaboration and affiliation.

And I think that's the future mission of the Center -- to make that work. So that there is an ongoing connectiveness between the Center, the alumni and the institutions of South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia.

Growing the Alumni

Maybe I'll make two more comments about this. There is a dispute that will never be answered, whether short-termers have the same dedication to the East-West Center as long-termers.

OK, and my experience is that a lot of the new leadership are short-termers. The old -- the long-termers no longer have either the energy, or they are frustrated over the years for various reasons -- but they are no longer the key group, at least in South Asia and that East-West Center needs to -- in various ways -- cultivate these people. APLP is now organized as an alumni unit. I think there are other groups that need to be. For example, in my mind, the major incomplete function that still needs to be done is to take the 38 years of Population's Summer Seminar and organize them into a functioning alumni group -- both professionally and socially. They are a powerful group. You go anywhere in South Asia and it's the one group of East-West Center alumni that knows the East-West Center still has connectiveness -- still sees purpose.

I tried to, when I was president, to organize satellite chapters around New York City. So I wrote to everybody in Connecticut, Westchester, New Jersey, and New York and Long Island, and tried to have a meeting. Eventually four people showed up. And, I realized - - and people who didn't come, who knew me, called me or wrote e-mails, and the same thing happened in Australia, when I spoke to people. They said look, we live very busy

lives. To try to get to a meeting where nothing professionally is happening -- just for nostalgic and social purposes -- is very difficult.

And so, I began to realize that programs at the alumni level, and at the East-West Center level, might be better if they combined the two -- the professional and the nostalgic -- like at our conferences. But in the meantime, ASDP [*Asian Studies Development Program*] the teacher group -- they run their own programs. And APLP is doing the same, and I think the demographers could do the same. In addition to being part of the East-West Center.

And one of the functions of the East-West Center is to have those in Namji's groups [*AsiaPacificEd*] and the teacher groups, to have them see that they are actually part of a larger East-West Center continuum that includes 50,000 people. And that they are not just that one group -- that you were afraid might become too small and almost incestual. (laughter) You know.

First of all, when they come here, to make sure that they are introduced to the entire Center and not just to their own little seminars. And we've moved along that line. We've developed a video now of that, and we're developing a Powerpoint [*presentation*] also. So we're addressing that issue.

The reality is that they are at the most important point in life until retirement; it's their professional growth that's so important to them. And so the [*alumni*] conference provides both. But in the meantime, how to keep them active? To me, it seems like an alumni chapter should have a program in demography for the demographers -- art for the artists, and so on, and so forth.

The people no longer want to come for just a social function. Right, and Mumbai is impossible to move -- it takes an hour and a half (laughter) to get you anywhere, and New

Delhi is getting that way, and I'm sure it's the same in the Philippines. I'm sure it's the same everywhere, you know.

How to move, is -- well, I've been at it for eight years. I should have some ideas.

(laughter)

You know. I don't know what I'll do next. We'll see. I supposedly will continue with the history project maybe, and with this conference going on in Pakistan. And, in the meantime, I've become a docent at the [*Honolulu*] Academy of Arts after two years of training. Again a result of my EWC and UH experience. As a student, I had this wonderful Hindu and Buddhist art course with Professor [*Prithwish*] Neogy which inspired me. Incredible experiences, you know. I have an art collection from Bangladesh to Indonesia. Some of my wife's, some of it mine.

EWC's Impact

The Mission

My perception of the East-West Center originally was one of cultural interchange. That being its major mission -- to have people understand each other's cultures. The research element was clearly at that time secondary in our minds to the mission of the Center.

Technical interchange was second, and we hoped that we were providing a cadre of people who understood each other around the world. And that was our major understanding and the alumni have never changed that opinion: that the major element of the East-West Center should be the student program and providing that international network.

The Center's mission itself was viewed differently. As time passed, you know American universities began to have similar kinds of programs and so the East-West Center was forced to re-discover itself -- to re-define itself, and it did that over the next 30 years, I

think rather effectively. First with the institutes, and then you know, removing from its purview the technical part, because now countries themselves could provide technical assistance for nurses, and so on, and then the scientists, and the agriculturalists, and the historians, and the art people began to wither away, so that you are now clearly focused on social science.

And the research element has become much more prominent than -- both budgetarily -- well I can't say that. I don't know what the original budget was, but I know it is a very strong budget today. There is a lot more need to politic in Washington and Congress -- at least perceived to be so -- by the Center's administration and I'm not sure that that's -- well, I don't know, I can't judge that. I'm not there. But they perceive that to be important for fundraising if we continue to get State Department support, so maybe some of the research -- certainly the *[EWC]* office in Washington is clearly directed at providing those needs.

My own feeling is that if the Center moves too far away from the idea of the importance of interculturalism -- understanding cultures, and having students here -- that it's going to run into problems. That *[research]* publications in and of the budgets by itself, for my money, does not deepen the prominence of the East-West Center in the countries that I visited -- to the degree that developing another generation of student supporters would.

It is more important that a new generation of East-West Center alumni be established and be active -- because they're getting old. (laughter) You know. We are the '70s, late '60s -- the group that has been most supportive of the Center, and there is nobody following. There is a huge gap -- at least in South Asia -- I don't think it's true in the Philippines, or in Southeast Asia, or in China or Japan -- but it is true in South Asia.

I haven't studied the statistics. I know student numbers are up, but I'm not sure what that

really means. I know we have, you know grants for Timorians, and Cambodians, and so on. But I wonder if the core program of M.A.-Ph.D. students and the monies devoted to them have really not decreased percentage-wise over time.

I know that the cost per student is greater, and all of that. But what percentage of the budget has gone to that program in the past -- and is it increasing, maintaining itself or decreasing now -- is something that I don't have an answer for. But I hope that the Center's mission continues in developing that kind of person who is '60s-like, or '70s-like.