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EAST-WEST CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Phil Estermann Interview Narrative

2-8-2006 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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Phil Estermann

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Personal Background

I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1942. My family moved to upper central Minnesota when I was three years old, so I grew up in a little farm community in north central Minnesota. Hewitt, a little town of 300. It was a great way to grow up, actually, you know, living in a small town like that, being close to nature, fishing, hunting, and knowing everybody in town. A very close, small community.

My father owned the hardware store in town, my uncle owned the grocery store, and my grandfather was a justice of the peace, so (laughter) I wouldn't say we ran the town, but, uh, we were well-known in town, let's say. There were only 300 people there. So that was my upbringing until I was 10 years old. Then we moved to St. Paul when I was 10, for a few months, and then we moved out to California. So it was a big shift for the family.

My dad was always kind of an adventurous guy, and he had succeeded in what he had set out to do. He had done well with the hardware store and all that, and he was able to find a buyer to buy the whole thing, our house and the hardware store. And, I think my parents were tired of the weather, too. It was mostly my dad's initiative, I believe.

I was the middle of three boys, I had an older and a younger brother, and we headed out to California, first to Modesto for a year, then down to Fresno for two years, and then down to Visalia where I entered high school, ninth grade, and did all of my high school at Mount Whitney High School in Visalia. I spent my first year in college at the junior

college in Visalia, The College of the Sequoias. My sophomore year I went down to the University of Redlands in Redlands, California.

My junior year, I always had this yearning for seeing the world, for traveling, so I spent the fall semester of my junior year in Mexico at the University of Mexico, with a group of Redlands students. In the spring semester of my junior year, I went off to Europe with another group of Redlands students, so I spent my entire junior year abroad, in Mexico and in Europe. We toured Europe and studied history, German, art history. When the group ended up in London in the spring of 1963, at the end of the semester, many of the students came back to the U.S. Some traveled in Europe.

I went to Germany and got a job in a factory making washing machines and refrigerators, and made good money for the summer. Then, in the fall, I went back to Salzburg, Austria, where our group had been based, spent some time with my professor who was still there, he and his wife, who was my mentor in my college days, a history professor and art history professor. I stayed in a Cistercian monastery for a little while, did some meditation, or what I thought was meditation (laughter) for a few days, and then headed down to Spain where I had a job. The guy who I'd worked for in Germany was building summer homes for wealthy Germans down on the Costa Brava, just south of Barcelona. So, I went down and worked for him for three weeks, and then I started traveling from there, in the fall of 1963. I went down through Madrid, and to Gibraltar. Went across the strait and started hitchhiking from Tangiers across North Africa to Cairo.

I was in Cairo when President Kennedy was assassinated. From there I went up to Beirut [*Lebanon*], Damascus [*Syria*], Amman [*Jordan*], Jerusalem. Spent about a month in Jerusalem and was there when Pope Paul came on his first pilgrimage in January of '64. I went east from there. It was a cold, bitter winter. I headed east to Baghdad [*Iraq*] and

Tehran and Zahedan [*both Iran*], Quetta and Multan in Pakistan, up to Lahore, and across to Amritsar in India and down to Delhi. Then down to Patna [*India*], and up to Kathmandu [*Nepal*], and back down to Calcutta [*now Kolkata, India*], and then flew from Calcutta to Bangkok [*Thailand*], and from Bangkok went over to Angkor Wat in Cambodia and back, and then down the peninsula, through Panang [*Thailand*] and Kuala Lumpur [*Malaysia*] to Singapore.

From there I caught a French ship, sailed steerage on a Messageries Maritimes line to Saigon [*Vietnam*], and on to Hong Kong, where I stayed for three weeks with some Redlands friends, and then caught the next ship through to Kobe. From there I went to Tokyo, and by that time I was out of money, and was able to get a job on an American ship sailing from Yokohama back to the U.S. through the Panama Canal, to New Orleans. At New Orleans, I disembarked with a handful of cash, about three times what it had taken me to hitchhike, or to travel from Tangiers to Japan.

Which was amazing, yeah. So I got back, went back to Redlands for my senior year, and graduated from Redlands, and then headed off to graduate school. At the time, I had a choice between or, I sought out choices, but I could have gone into the Peace Corps in Africa, in Nigeria, actually, but I decided I would rather go to graduate school. So I had a graduate fellowship in public and international affairs, at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. So I headed back there in June right away, June of '65, after I graduated. I spent the next three years, essentially in Washington, working at a part-time job in the U.S. Senate while I was at G.W.

Life Before EWC

USAID Program in Vietnam

From there, I went to Vietnam as a USAID summer intern in the summer of 1966. They recruited some students from around the country to go and experience, uh, to help out with the AID program. I think their thought was -- putting some graduate students out in the field would educate the students as to what was happening in Vietnam, and be somewhat of a buffer -- maybe these people could be spokespersons, to help to create more of a dialogue on university campuses.

It was quite a small program, there were only 30 of us who went to Vietnam. I think 10 went to Laos in that same program. Then I came back in '67, and resumed my graduate work at George Washington for a master's degree. And then went to work with Human Sciences Research, which was a small social science research company on the outskirts of Washington, in McLean, Virginia, actually, that had a contract with the [U.S.] Defense Department to study the refugee movement in Vietnam.

I went back with them in '67, went back to Vietnam, and spent several months west of Danang in a Special Forces camp. It was actually a combined Special Forces and MACV camp (Military Advisory Command Vietnam) and we studied the refugee situation around that particular camp, which was at a district headquarters in Thuong Duc district, in the western part of Quang Nam province. Following that, I went back to Washington. I was with Terry Rambo on that project. We were colleagues on that research project. Later I know he was an EWC researcher. Terry came to Honolulu after I did, it may have been the following year, may have been a couple years later. There were several people who actually worked in Vietnam as part of that refugee study, who eventually came out to Hawai'i.

After the refugee study, I went back and I finished off the master's degree, and, at that point, you know, the Tet Offensive came, in early February '68, and it really changed [American] people's perceptions and feelings about what could be accomplished in Vietnam. Talking about American feelings, the funding for this type of social science research just disappeared, actually, pretty much, and the interest in continuing this type of research, I think it didn't totally disappear, the funding just started to diminish. So I didn't want to try to stay on doing that under those circumstances.

UH, Late 1960s

I thought I'd go on to Ph.D. studies, and at the time, that was in early '68, I could have gone up to Cornell. I applied to Brown University, and could have gone into their China projects, their China program. And I was looking at doing language study at Cornell in the summer of '68, and Gary Larsen, who was my roommate at Redlands our senior year in '64, '65, he had come here [Honolulu] right after he graduated from Redlands, and was just finishing up his master's here, and he suggested, "Why don't you come out here and study a language and just see if you want to stay out here, and then you could look at the Ph.D. program at the university here."

I thought that was a good idea, and I came out in June of '68, and spent the summer of '68 studying Bahasa Indonesia [*official language of Indonesia*], and had a great time. Got a job at the Asia Training Center for the fall, and then decided to apply to the Ph.D. program in political science here at the University of Hawai'i, and was accepted. And so my first year I worked at the Asia Training Center part-time, editing interviews of Americans who had been primarily serving in Vietnam. They also might have been serving in other countries, maybe Laos, maybe other parts of Southeast Asia.

I can't recall all of what the Asia Training Center did, except it oriented, trained people who were going to -- mostly civilians, I believe -- serve extended tours in Vietnam, in particular. It was a very culture-based kind of training, you know, how to live in another culture. In-depth training, I think. It was probably one of those programs that was a luxury for the U.S. government to support, but it was a good effort to get people squared away, both in terms of language, or cultural background, historical background, of where they're going, so that they would be better adapted to function in that environment. But they also interviewed these people after they served their tours, and so they had extensive, open-ended interviews of these people. They would bring them back through Honolulu.

They were long and detailed, and very interesting. Some of them, fascinating, in terms of their perceptions and experiences while they'd been serving in Vietnam. And, so, a few of us were hired to edit those. And they were transcribed, and then we would go through and edit and make them readable. And those are a great resource, actually. I think there's a whole set of those over at the UH library.

There were a group of people, you know, who worked there, who have UH and East-West Center connections. Jim Hall, being one, that's where I first met Jim Hall.

They had just had the big sit-in at Bachman Hall, I think it was May of '68, and, yeah, this campus was hot, like most university campuses were, during the Vietnam War. Lots of protests, and actually, as I mentioned, in my first year here, I wasn't actually at the Center.

Life at EWC

Campus Life, Late 1960s/Vietnam War

I actually had come to Hawai'i in June of 1968 to explore being a Ph.D. student in political science at the University of Hawai'i. I joined the Center as a grantee in the fall of 1969.

I spent one year as a graduate student and a grantee living in Hale Manoa. Then, I took a year off and worked for Model Cities in Kalihi-Palama, and I came back to the Center in the fall of 1971 and stayed for three more semesters. So, all of 1971-72 school year, and then the fall semester in 1972, and then I dropped out, gave up my grant and left the East-West Center and the University graduate program.

I came back to the Center in December of 1991, as the administrative coordinator for USAID Projects in the Population Program, until 1999 or 2000 when we re-organized. My current title is grants officer.

When I joined the Center in the fall of '69, the Center was attempting to create dialogue, and to have opportunities for discussion about the war, and I think, maybe, to provide some dialogue opportunities that -- because the East-West Center had an obligation, I think, to do that, and, I was going to say, to go beyond, perhaps. To do something more than just provide a forum for people to protest.

So, I participated in one, maybe more than one of those dialogues, but I remember sitting in a panel and being a discussant, and it included East-West Center students from Vietnam. I remember, one of the things that stands out in my mind was, one of the University professors in political science coming up to me afterwards and saying, "Oh, you let 'em off too easy."

I don't remember if I was moderating or just speaking, I don't think I was moderating.

But it wasn't just that I was letting my fellow students from Vietnam off too easily, but also that I was not as critical, say, of what was happening in Vietnam as he would have liked me to be, or wanted me to be, and I think that either of those or both of those was quite possible, as, you know, being the intent of his comment. Because I had spent two periods in Vietnam, you know, working and studying the situation there, and to my mind there were many, many good people who were, call them allies of the U.S., but they were committed to their own country and advancing democracy and good politics.

In Vietnam, there were Vietnamese people that were not a part of the anti-government movement, not part of the Vietcong, certainly not from North Vietnam, who were at a point... You're basically looking at the Vietcong movement, part of the civil war that was going on there, the revolutionary movement that the communists were leading. And, so I would characterize these people as being non-communists who worked hard to -- and believed in some future for their government, and were working towards that -- a future for their country that would be a non-communist future.

And I recognized the legitimacy of those aspirations, I valued those people as friends, and so, my perceptions of what was happening in Vietnam were colored by that reality, and, you know -- it was a conflicted moment -- it was a very conflicting time for me, because I could not totally justify what the U.S. was doing there, and what it was trying to do.

I think that the whole gamut of positions and feelings existed in the East-West Center community. Earlier on Noel Kent, I guess tried to bring down the flag. That was before I came to the East-West Center. Noel's an East-West Center alum, and he's a UH professor today, in the Ethnic Studies department. So there were protests, either by individuals or groups of people.

You know, the East-West Center experience is a complex one, in the sense that you learn to see reality through other people's eyes, and look at yourself and your culture a little more critically. And look at other people with more understanding and compassion and appreciation, and that adds a lot of nuance to life, you know -- the black and white of things gets cloudy and gray, and it's there that you start to have some good learning experiences.

Model Cities Program, 1970s

I took a year off after my first year at Hale Manoa and the East-West Center. I think that was an indication, clearly, at that point, that I wasn't quite sure about the direction of this Ph.D. work, and that my commitment wasn't quite as strong to it. I worked as a consultant for the Model Cities project in Kalihi-Palama. *[Editor's note: Model Cities was a federally funded program to encourage small business development.]* That was a really good experience, because that introduced me to a lot of very sharp, young local kids who were college students. Many of them, some of them have gone on to great accomplishments. They were in the Honolulu Community College program and destined to come to the University of Hawai'i at Manoa program.

We did some research together in Kalihi-Palama: a survey of attitudes, a survey of preferences, and so on, regarding development, industrial development within one census track there, census track 60 in lower Kalihi-Palama.

It was a good experience, because I really learned -- that was my first introduction, actually, to the broader complexity of local culture, the multi-ethnic society that Hawai'i is, and my girlfriend, who I'd met after I came here was local, was a local Japanese, American Japanese lady, so I'd gotten to know her family. So I was seeing a lot, learning about Hawai'i through her family. But this was a much broader ethnic exposure.

These are largely Hawaiian kids. Part Hawaiian. And Filipino. Yeah, it was very interesting and I learned a lot. It was an excellent introduction to Hawai'i, culturally, socially.

It was a program funded by the federal government. Money is given to the city government, I believe. Yeah, city government, to improve conditions and to do certain things, and to provide some social education, and do some community outreach in the lower-income parts of the city. And so there was a Model Cities Program in Kalihi-Palama, and one in Waianae. I don't know if there were other parts of the island where it operated also.

Some of the students became organizers of the Hawaiian Movement, and went through the Ethnic Studies Program. Pete Thompson, for one, became a very significant leader in the Ethnic Studies Program at UH.

Life at EWC, Early 1970s

Actually one of the leaders of the Model Cities Program, I should mention, was Amy Agbayani. I had already known Amy, but I was just going to say, the East-West Center connection to that program was there as well. So, yeah, after that, I came back to the East-West Center, I came back to the UH. I spent another three semesters, starting in the fall of '71, taking courses, and actually, it became quite clear that I couldn't regenerate the interest that I needed, to continue the program.

I was getting somewhat bored with school and I didn't have a fix on a dissertation topic, on an objective to do research at the Ph.D. level. I just didn't have the drive to do it. I was more interested in getting out and doing something. It was sort of the community part of it that was really a challenge. I think the Kalihi-Palama experience opened my mind. And then, the other thing was, that, you know, the environmental movement was

just taking off, and April of 1970 was the first Earth Day, April 22nd. And that had a really major impact on me, because I began to look at issues globally, through an environmental lens, and locally, looking at local issues as well.

At the same time, I was traveling -- I'd gone over to Moloka'i, we called it "Molokai" in those days, it was before people started pronouncing it correctly. But, I went over to Moloka'i around 1970 with my girlfriend at the time, and we met, over there, a Hawaiian fellow who invited me back, and I went back several times during that period, '70, '71, up until I left the East-West Center at the end of '72. I went back to visit him and just learn more about the island.

You know, Moloka'i is a very rural island and maybe some of my rural upbringing was also a factor, but I very much enjoyed the rural environment over there. Plus, being welcomed by new friends in the community there made it all the better. And then I became aware, through this friend, of what was planned for that island in terms of its urban development, that the county leaders, the Maui county leaders in Molokai -- some handful of Molokai leaders, mostly the owners of the two largest ranches there -- had laid out this big plan in 1968, I believe it was, to develop the west end of the island and the coastline on the south part of the island from Kaunakakai out east. They were basically going to urbanize this island. The projected development would have put 20,000 to 25,000 people out on the west end as a suburban community for Oahu, with hotels, major resort hotels, resort areas, and then golf courses and condos around all of that, and, as you went up the slope to Maunaloa, single-family homes. They had a huge plan, and, actually had, in 1968, gotten the largest land-use redistricting ever in the state of Hawai'i's history, second only to the Mililani town redistricting.

The land use commission took land from the agriculture and conservation districts and put it in the urban district, on the state land use plan in 1968 to build a mammoth community. That community alone, if it had been built, would have quintupled the population of the island. It would have totally changed the island. In addition to that, there were smaller resorts planned along the south coast of Molokai, as you drive east from Kaunakakai out to Halawa valley, resort and condo development along that coastline. So they had a small group of people that basically laid out a plan that received no public input or testimony. I became aware of that, and you have to remember, this is in the context of increasing environmental consciousness. I was very much taken by the challenge of that, and said, you know, this shouldn't happen.

Hale Manoa, Early 1970s

I should also add, living in Hale Manoa at that time, it was a great luxury, it was a great environment, in a way. I enjoyed the socializing that took place there, and the cafeteria over at Jefferson Hall was just, you know, always wonderful being there and meeting your friends and talking for hours, and so on. So, I spent a fair amount of time in Hale Manoa looking out across the landscape and thinking about what I wanted to do.

I enjoyed my courses, most of them. I had the luxury of thinking, reflecting, and sort of gathering my thoughts about what I wanted to do. But my academic program wasn't developing. I just didn't have the commitment to it. So I decided to leave the Center and went to talk to Lyn [*Flanigan*] Anzai who was my counselor, program officer, whatever -- and told her I was going to leave, and I gave up the grant in December of 1972. It was a good grant, you know, when you think about it, I gave up Ph.D. field research in Asia. It was a wonderful grant.

But I wanted to get out to do something different.

Life After EWC

Molokai, Community Organizing

So I left the East-West Center in early 1973, moved over to Molokai. I went out to Waianae, actually, for three months, right after leaving the Center. Stayed with friends in Waianae, Nanakuli actually, and spent three months doing research. I'd come into town, go into the Land Use Commission offices. Just spent a period of time poring over this 1968 decision that the Land Use Commission had made to urbanize Molokai. And then, in March of '73, I believe it was, I moved over to Molokai.

And began a two-and-a-half-year period of living in the community and organizing people who felt the same way, who did not want the island to change. And the goal was to empower them to affect the future of the island. And, you know, many of those people today are in real positions of authority and leadership on the island. The island's changed, but it has not developed to the extent people planned for it back in those days.

Molokai, '74-'75, Picking Pineapple

Yeah, I was at the end of my living on Molokai. I spent the summer of '75 picking pineapples. By my recollection, it was supposed to be the last summer that Dole -- there were two plantations, Dole and Del Monte on Molokai.

And I picked for the Del Monte plantation at Kualapu'u. And, that was a good experience.

It's rough work, it's tough work. It's very hard work. It's very hot, you wear a lot of thick clothing, chaps. You wear chaps, and Levis and sweatshirt, and shirt, and you have to tape your shirtsleeves down around your wrists, and you tape your pants -- because pineapple plants are very poky. Pineapple plants, it's a rough plant, and you get cut up and poked up.

Taped up so no spine, the end of the plant, can't find its way up and it'll cut your arm or scratch your arm. So you're entirely covered with goggles and a hat, and maybe something around your neck, and so you're totally bound up to protect you, with big, thick gloves on that go all the way up to your upper arms, you know, up to your elbows, and you start work at, you know, 5 o'clock in the morning, or so, before it's even light, and you finish work mid-afternoon. And, starting at about 9 o'clock-10 o'clock in the morning -- on a summer day -- it is very hot. And it's tough work.

And, you know, the people that have done this work historically in Hawaii were Filipinos who came from the Philippines. Both men and women, worked in the pineapple fields, planting and picking pineapple. And, so, harvesting pineapple was my summer job on Molokai. It was a great experience, wonderful people to work with, and pretty good money. It's tough work, so you get paid reasonably well, but you don't get rich, but since I wasn't getting paid by Life of the Land, really (laughter). Very much, hardly. And considering I was getting food stamps from the government and whatever, it was good money.

Institutional Transitions

Institutes vs Students/Facilitator Training

In the '60s and the '70s, when I was living in Hale Manoa, the Vietnam War was a divisive issue for everybody. And everybody had to deal with it in one way or another, if not actively, at least, in their minds they had to think about it.

But one of the things that occurred also was that this was the beginning, at the Center, this was in 1970, '69-'70 was when the problem-oriented programs or institutes came into being. And, you know, there was a lot of resistance to that amongst the students.

There were senior scholars that were coming in for a year, so, lived at Lincoln Hall, I guess. And they would study problems in those subject matters, but at the same time, this would mean a diminishing of the student program.

So, a good part of the East-West Center's budget was going to be spent creating what would essentially be a research program. And, each of these institutes would have a set of researchers, and this was a significant draw-down on the funds available to the Center. I don't know whether Congress increased the Center's budget so that the student program didn't get hit, but the perception was, that the student program was going to take a big hit and there would be, you know, a diminishment of the attention just paid to students in the Center, and students were concerned.

We had meetings about this, and there was one group, who -- I don't know, I helped sort of facilitate this in a way, talking -- had meetings, and the emphasis was on intercultural. In other words, there was a whole thing, about "What is the essence of the East-West Center experience?" and, you know, "What's so valuable about the student experience?" And so, you sort of conceptualize that or capture that in this term "intercultural." You know, people living together, learning from each other, learning to see the world through somebody else's eyes. So, there were these meetings on intercultural at that time. And it was in the context of opposition to this problem-oriented approach, that came into being in 1970.

I just remember the students feeling aggravated about it, and our having meetings about it and forums and discussions.

Actually it may have been '70-'71, instead of '71-'72, but two summers I went to the Center for Studies of the Person, I think it was called. Or, Center for the Study of the Person, which was a program started by Carl Rogers in La Jolla, California. And his

type of therapy, which he developed, was called “client-centered therapy,” and to distill it down into basics, it has to do with therapy that's based on the notion that every individual has that healing power within themselves, to heal whatever it is that's bothering them mentally or emotionally, creating problems for them.

So, the idea is that you find that solution yourself. And there are ways for people to facilitate that experience. And, so, for the first summer, I spent three weeks there, basically as just a participant in this. It was part of the “encounter group movement.” People labeled it as encounter groups, and, its people sitting around -- 10 or 12 people together -- letting whatever happens, happen, in terms of discussing what's on their minds.

So there's a lot of coming to grips with your emotions, coming to grips with what's deep inside you -- letting some stuff boil up that you've been sitting on for years, or repressing, and so on. And sharing that, and then working through it.

And, the idea is, when you vocalize this, when you let it come up, that is a form of therapy right there, you are dealing with it. And, it's something that's been sitting deep in your soul, or whatever, and now it's on the surface and you see it, and you deal with it, you talk about it. And, so, that's what, basically, this experience is. And then they invited me back the next summer to be a facilitator, because every group has a facilitator. And so, I learned, actually, a lot about myself through that, and I also learned how to listen. I don't know that I was a bad listener before, but I know, following those experiences, that I was a much better listener. And so, learning to listen is a part of being a good facilitator. So that was good grounding. I could not have done the organizing that I did without having gone through that. I'm clear about that.

So, I know without those La Jolla experiences, I really could not have succeeded in accomplishing what I set out to do, without having had those experiences. I'm sure about that. Because it totally enriched my understanding of how to see myself and how to relate to other people.

Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG), Early 1970s

In the early '70s, Ralph Nader was very influential in that period, and they were organizing public interest research groups. They were sprouting up on university campuses and there are, today, PIRGs, or public interest research groups *[all]* around the U.S. In fact, there's a national PIRG, too.

I met with a group of students here. Would have been, I'd say, in that '71-'72 period when I was still at Hale Manoa, and there was some incipient movement. "Let's organize a PIRG," right? And so, I worked with these students. It strikes me that most of them were undergraduate students rather than graduate students, but there may have been some graduate students in there as well. And so I tried to help them get started.

The purpose is to do public interest research, to do research on issues. Pollution issues, environmental issues. Could involve surveys, you know, it depends on how much money you have, but you have to get started somehow, in doing research, and then speaking out on a topic that you've been researching, right? But you have to have some cohesion, you have to have some groupness. You have to form a group, right?

So, I went to their meetings and facilitated -- did what I could to sort of jump-start the movement, the group. And then, I don't know if that was at the period that I was just leaving the Center, or it was at the end of the school year in '71-'72 in the spring. In any case, I left for a month or so. I don't know what period it was, exactly, but when I next heard about it, the group had fallen apart.

I saw one of the students on campus, and he said, "Oh, it just fell apart, we didn't keep going." And it was a good experience for me. I mean, you have to nurture, nurture effort into existence, if it's cooperative effort, collaborative effort. And you have to get things to a point where it can be self-sustaining. And I think that was a good experience for me in my later organizing period on Moloka'i, and it's even an experience I think about today, when I'm trying to organize collaborative research projects in Asia.

We do our research projects with partners in Asia, you know. There are a lot of ideas that float around the [EWC] Research Program all the time about doing this or doing that, and the ones that gain traction, or move forward, are the ones that you invest a certain amount of time in. You have to nurture these things into existence, and some of them take longer than others. Some of them take a long time.

I'm working on one now that is taking quite a while. And so, that was just a good experience for me. You can't expect, just because people get together and talk and have good ideas and think they want to do something, that they're going to stick together, and that something very positive is going to come out of that. It has to be nurtured to a point of sustainability and you have to keep that in mind.

Ties That Last

Travel in Asia/Work in Hawaii Government, '70s-'80s

My girlfriend, now my wife, was living in Japan teaching English, so I headed over there. She had been teaching there for two years, and I headed over there in September of '75, thinking I would be gone for three months or so, that we would travel a bit and then come back to Hawai'i. We traveled for the rest of the year together through Japan and Korea, and then decided to go to Southeast Asia. So, in January of '76, we headed for

Southeast Asia, went down to Bangkok, and spent the next seven months just traveling around Southeast Asia.

Stayed a lot with East-West Center friends: in Panang stayed with Shabbir Cheema, and down to Kuala Lumpur, stayed with Terry and Dawn Rambo. Singapore, took a boat to Jakarta, stayed with Peter Jennings and Jay and Ann Parsons, and then off to Jogjakarta and saw Terry and Val Hull there, and then to Bali. And then back the same way, we retraced our steps all the way back up to Bangkok, and went all the way up into the golden triangle, trekking up along the Burmese border.

And then, went to Manila and there we saw Puongpun and Thanh-Lo Sananikone and Richard Schatz and Richard Wada and their wives, and these are all East-West Center people. And then we ended up almost virtually broke and back in Japan, and so both of us had to teach English for another year to make some money.

We left there in late spring, summer of 1977. And I got a job on another ship, I was able to sail back to Hawai'i on an American tanker, and made some money coming back to Hawai'i. And then we traveled again for another six months or so. We traveled around the U.S., just staying with friends, and visiting relatives and friends. We did a big circle around the U.S., and came back in late '77, and then we got married in '78.

In 1979, I went to work for Jean King, who was the new lieutenant governor of Hawai'i until she ran for governor in 1982 and lost in the primary. She ran against George Ariyoshi.

After that, I went over to the [*Honolulu*] City Council, worked for nearly four years at the City Council for Welcome Fawcett as senior advisor to Welcome until she was defeated in '86.

I was unemployed for a little while, did a little consulting, and in 1988 went to work for the [Hawai'i] State Energy Division, conservation officer in the conservation branch.

Joining EWC Staff, 1990s

Worked there until December of '91, and was lucky to come back to the East-West Center in the administrative coordinator role for the USAID-funded projects in the Population Program [*Population Institute then*], and have been at the Center ever since. I think it's a great place to work. I enjoy being here, and I still think I have some things to contribute, things I've learned, and, so here I am.

EWC's Impact

Core Experience

I think that when you look at the core experience, or you try to understand the core experience of being a student at the East-West Center -- and we talked about that a little bit, you know -- you're in a kind of social, cultural laboratory, people from different cultures and societies living together, and through living and working together, you understand more about yourself, and more about the world.

I don't think that the Center was, in my life, the primary experience for that. I think I had had that experience, in many ways, before I came to the Center. You know, there were the experiences that I had when I was 20 to 21 years old of living in Mexico and Europe, and then traveling around the world for a year, you know, in '63 to '64 when I took a year off from college and just traveled? That was seminal. That really exposed me to many of these awarenesses and understandings that the Center experience provides for others. I'll just give you one example of that. When I was in Cairo in November of 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated. And what was interesting was how deeply the

Arabs, the Egyptians and other Arabs that I met as I traveled through the Middle East, felt about that. They were incredibly sad, and in grief over his death.

And why would that be? Well, because they saw Kennedy as a friend to the Arab people, a friend to the Palestinian people, and it was in the context of their long-term bitter struggle over Palestine that this feeling was happening. There was a widespread belief that it was a Zionist conspiracy, that a Jewish conspiracy had killed Kennedy.

And that was no small belief. I mean, this was very widespread, and so trying to understand that, and to understand the feeling behind that, the perception behind that.

Everything was looked at through the lens of the anti-Israeli feeling. And that was a profound exposure for me to appreciate that, and to not just feel it in Cairo at the time of the assassination, when there was widespread public grief -- mourning? Absolutely!

People expressed their sadness, and their regrets, you know. But to experience that -- that was November 22nd of '63 -- and then, as I traveled, weeks later, to Beirut and Damascus, and to Jerusalem, and then, later to Baghdad and Tehran, you know. The feeling amongst Muslims in that part of the world was so colored by the experience of the Palestinians, and what Israel represented to them.

In the rest of my travels and then working in Vietnam, as well, I think that I had a kind of cultural sensitivity, and tolerance for ambiguity, and willingness to sort of absorb or interest in absorbing and understanding where other people are coming from, that preceded my arrival at the East-West Center.

Inter-island Tours

So, I don't think of the Center experience as being primary and seminal, in terms of my personal growth in that regard, but let me say that the Center experience enriched my understanding of that, and I can give an example of that. In 1969 -- it wasn't my first

year at the Center, '69, '70 -- I and two other people were hired by the Center on a small consultancy to examine the inter-island tour experience.

The *[EWC participant]* inter-island tours occurred during semester break, after Christmas and before the semester started in January. Or it may have been during the spring break, during the spring holidays. I just can't recall what time of the year it was, but, the East-West Center organized these inter-island tours. *[Editor's note: The Pacific and Asian Affairs Council organized these tours but many of its participants were East-West Center students.]* And, what they consisted of was, a group of students, say, 10 or so East-West Center students going to the Neighbor Islands for a week or 10 days. Three of us, Bill Samways, Phil King and myself were the three researchers, OK? And we each joined a different group.

My group went to Maui. We went to St. Anthony's School and we did a presentation.

We did a little talent show, and we each went into a class and talked about Asia, or U.S.-Asia, or cultural things.

They were a mix of East-West participants. You'd bring your garb along, your national costume, if you wanted to dress up when you went to the school, yes. I think the idea was to let Hawaii school students interact with representatives -- college students -- from other cultures. And so, each group would be made up of a cross-section of East-West Center students. I know, in our group there was one Japanese, another American.

(laughter) I can't remember all the others that were in the group.

We were participant-observers. That's a type of research, right? Participant-observers: You are a participant and an observer of what happens. And so, we did that and our group went from Maui, went to the Big Island, and we did the same thing at another school on the Big Island, and then we drove all around.

On Maui, we drove, probably, up to Haleakala, and maybe down to Hana, I forget. And on the Big Island, we went all the way around the island -- a minivan, two minivans, going around -- but you had to live together. And so we camped.

You're living together. The important message here: I'm getting to the living-together part, because when they had departure interviews, or when students would be ready to leave to go back to their home countries, one of the questions was, "What was the highlight of your stay at the East-West Center?" And a large number of them would always say, the inter-island tour.

So, the East-West Center wanted to know, what's special about the inter-island tour?

What is it -- why do people keep saying the inter-island tour was so important to them, and valuable? And, I think, important in terms of getting to know people, and having, say, an inter-cultural experience. That was what was important. That's what they said was important.

But why? Why was that so important? And so, each of us went with a group and took notes about what we saw, and so on, and then we came back and compared our notes, and we wrote a report on it. And it was our judgment that what was so valuable about the inter-island tour was that it took the East-West Center students and put them in a context where they had to solve problems together. And these are not huge problems, but they are problems that create bonding. What are we going to eat today? Who's going to fix the food? Who's going to go buy the food? And in the course of solving those problems together, it built relationships.

People interacted at a level that they might not have interacted, and they got to know people. And so this problem-solving environment created a bonding opportunity, and people became very close in a very short period of time. And so, that enriched my

understanding as to the value of how you can use experiences like this to bring people together, and to create understanding.

And, I'm told now, I don't know to what extent -- I'm in the Research Program, so I don't interact every day with the Education Program, but I understand there is some of that still in existence within the Education Program. There are still some efforts to get people out and into a different environment, have them live together. But, the inter-island tour ceased to be a part of the student program, as a major part of the student program. And I think it's worth remembering.

There are many times, I can tell you, in the Research Program, where I've thought about that, and I've often thought, when "Hey, there are a couple of people in here who are not agreeing, I'd like to go off camping!" (laughter)

Go on a retreat for a few days, at least, you know, and spend some time together, just living together and doing some basic things together.

Current Work

Everybody's life is sort of an accumulation of prior experience, and, whatever you're doing today is a result of things that you did years ago, or, maybe not so long ago. I would say that the Center experience, I think, enriched my understanding and my awareness of other ways of being, and other ways to look at life and to perceive reality, whatever that is.

People know of my background, they know that I've been here, they know that the East-West Center is part of my experience.

I think that my job involves a lot of creativity right now. My job is to help create new projects, primarily in the Research Program, but I just spent a lot of time last week in the

Education Program, working with them on a new project as well. And, I work with people in the Seminars Program, also.

So, I have a job that cuts across the different divisions within the Center, and the three main programs within the Center. And, I think that, to the extent I'm effective, it is a result of my understanding of what the Center's all about: My experience at the Center when I was a student, and my experiences outside the Center as well. But, I think that, you know, I think I have a good understanding of the Center's mission and by creating activities, particularly research projects that involve a range of participants from Asia and the Pacific, primarily Asia -- that when I'm successful at that, it really is reflective of my Center experience. And, it's just building more of that.

My job consists of simply taking Center experience and making it more multifaceted, and building on top of what's already been achieved. Bringing new people into the community, the East-West Center community. Enriching the partnerships and the friendships that already exist, and trying to build activities that will improve on policy and understanding.