



EAST-WEST CENTER
COLLABORATION • EXPERTISE • LEADERSHIP



EAST-WEST CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Kenji Sumida Interview Narrative

7-31-2007 interview in Honolulu, Hawaii

Please cite as: Kenji Sumida, interview by Phyllis Tabusa, July 31, 2007, interview narrative, East-West Center Oral History Project Collection, East-West Center, Honolulu Hawaii.

These narratives, which reflect interviewees' personal perceptions, opinions, and memories, may contain errors of fact. They do not reflect positions or versions of history officially approved by the East-West Center.

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.

Co-coordinators: Terese Leber and Phyllis Tabusa

Narratives Editor: Susan Yim Griffin

Copyright East-West Center, 2008.

Kenji Sumida

7-31-2007 interview in Honolulu, Hawaii

Personal Background

My name is Kenji Sumida, and I spent a very interesting, sometimes exciting, and sometimes depressing nine years at the East-West Center.

I'm not sure how detailed I should get, but if you hear my background, you'll agree with me that I was the last person you would have expected to end up being President of the East-West Center. I'm a nisei, of course, and my parents came from Japan in the early 1900s to work in the plantations. I grew up in the public school system. I went to Maemae school in Nuuanu. By the way, I lived up in Nuuanu in a place called Jack Lane. Anyway, I went to Maemae Elementary School and then to Kawananakoa. At that time, it was being called the Experimental School, because it was a new school. But it was an intermediate school. Seventh, eighth, ninth grade. And then I went on to McKinley High School.

And then I went to the University [*of Hawai'i at Manoa*] here. One of the things that happened was that all freshmen were required to participate in the ROTC program. So one morning we were doing our drills and I looked across the field and saw these people in blue uniforms marching around. And they weren't carrying any rifles, and we were required to carry these heavy rifles. So afterwards, I went to check on it, and found out that that was the Air Force ROTC. So I went over there and said, "Can I join the Air Force ROTC" -- you know, I didn't say it was because I didn't want to carry any rifles, but I was accepted, there, and after your junior year, it's an elective if you want to continue to participate in the ROTC program.

Well, it turns out that in the junior and senior year, they paid you about 35 dollars a month to participate in what they call the Advanced ROTC program. So, because of that, I joined up just to get the 35 bucks a month. So I ended up graduating in 1953 with bachelor of business administration [*degree*] in industrial relations, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant, and we had two choices: you either go do administrative work or go fly, so I chose to go fly. Because, again, when you're a flyer, you get another extra 100 dollars a month for hazardous pay. So it was an economic decision more than anything else.

So I did go to flying school and then after flying school, I got assigned as an air refueling tanker pilot in Kansas, and I spent some time in England, and Norway, and Thule, Greenland. About 600 miles from the North Pole. Anyway, I left the Air Force in 1956 after a little over three years of service. Came back home.

I was offered a job with the airlines -- United Airlines -- but they wanted me to fly on the East Coast. And I asked them how long it would take to get to the West Coast and to Hawai'i, and they said, "About 14 years" -- and my wife said, "I'm not going to live on the East Coast. You can go if you want to." So I didn't take that job.

Life Before EWC

Years with City Government

Came back to Hawai'i. Looked for a job. And got a job as a personnel trainee at the City and County of Honolulu in their Civil Service Department. So I was a trainee. And then after I got the trainee job, I joined the Air National Guard, here.

That was in late 1956 when I got back to Honolulu, you know, from the Air Force. And then early '57, I got the job there at the City, as I said, as a personnel trainee. At about

the same time, I joined the Air National Guard here – and because I wanted to keep up my flying, you know?

So I stayed at the Civil Service Department for four years. And by the end of the four years, I was a senior personnel technician and I was in charge of doing all of the creating exams and giving exams to people who apply for City jobs as well as employees who apply for promotion.

So I did that. I also did some what they call classification work, where you go out and you classify people's jobs. At the time, the personnel director was a guy named Charley Clark. And then, in 1961, the City Charter was adopted for the first time. And what the Charter did was it created -- besides the mayor, it created the managing director's job that really ran the City, you know.

So Charley Clark was asked by Mayor Blaisdell to be the first managing director. And Charley said, "You know, I want you to come up with me to my office, and I'd like you to help me set up a Budget Office." Because at that time, they didn't have a real Budget Office. So he sent me to Fort Worth to study under a guy named Charles P. Cookingham. And people who study public administration know him, because he was one of the most famous city managers. He was a city manager at Kansas City and he was the guy that cleaned out the Pendergast mob that ran Kansas City for a long, long time.

So anyway, Cookingham was hired by Fort Worth, and had come down to Honolulu as a consultant to advise on the transition to a Charter. So Charley sent me to work with Cookingham for about three months because I knew nothing about budgeting. I was a personnel technician. So then I came back, and had to do all of the work in setting up the procedures and the instructions and that kind of thing for budget preparation for the City.

They had a budget -- they had a few budget people, but there was no real office, you know, so -- it was interesting. I was lucky, because as you'll see, in my entire career, I got a chance to take on different kinds of administrative, you know, work. Which, I think, in the end, helped prepare me better for the work I had to do here, at the East-West Center.

But anyway, I stayed there from '61 to 1964. And by that time, we had a new budget director. A budget director had come in under the mayor -- political appointee, and they began to put pressure on me to get involved in the mayor's campaign and to push the people under me to buy tickets and so forth -- that kind of thing. That wasn't my style, so -- I looked around and got a temporary demotion type of job.

Years with University of Hawai'i

So I had to step down to a lower classification of a job. To accept the job at the State Department of Budget and Finance. So I went there, and about a week after I got there, they said, "No, you're going to be a senior budget analyst in charge of a group of analysts that worked on the Department of Education and the University of Hawai'i's budget." *[Sumida was promoted]* after about two weeks. Because I guess they were lacking people who knew the budgeting work, and they didn't have anybody to handle the two largest departments, so I took that over. But I only did that for a year. Because about that time, they had just created the legislative auditor's position at the State.

They had never had one before that, and the first person they appointed as legislative auditor was a guy named Clinton Tanimura who had been the director of the Legislative Reference Bureau which was, at that time, attached to the University. It started in Sinclair Library. And they were in one of those temporary buildings right out here.

Anyway, they hired Clinton as the first legislative auditor and Clinton asked me whether I would come to work for him. You know, I knew Clinton from my working on that University budget. So I accepted the position -- so I resigned from Budget and Finance to accept the position with Clinton as one of the legislative auditor positions, but then I got a call from Charley James.

He was the assistant vice president for Business to Richard Takasaki, who was the vice president for Business at the University at that time. So Charley called and said, "Ken, we didn't know you were available. If you're available, why don't you come to work for us, instead?"

So when I talked to Clinton about it, Clinton said, "No, no. Go ahead and go up there. They'll need you more, than -- you know, and I can get somebody else." So I came up here [*to the university*] as what they called an institutional analyst.

Well, they were looking for people to help with the budget and administrative work. Because Takasaki had taken over as vice president not too long before that, and he wanted to kind of improve and change all of those systems at the University. Richard was famous for that -- going in and making changes. So I came up here, and initially, I did budget work at the University. And that was in 1965, I guess -- end of '65. So I worked here from '65 to '66, and then Takasaki asked me to head the Personnel Office. For the University. They call it the Staff Development and Management Office here, or something. And I really didn't care to do personnel work, but he had seen that I had personnel experience before I became a budget guy. So I took over for a year, and I really didn't care for it. But I did it. And then I finally hired someone to replace me.

And by that time, Richard said, "You know, we really have to get up to speed on the new information technology." So he said, "What I want you to do is to establish a Management Systems Office."

That was in 1966. No, no. '67. That's right. I went to work there in '65. A year later, I became the personnel officer, that's '66...'67. So we established the Management Systems Office and we hired a bunch of people. Well, one guy had come off the Air Force and had worked for some computer company. I forget the name of the computer company. A large computer company. DEC, I think it was. So we hired about four or five people with prior experience. And I had no experience in Information Systems, you have to understand. So we hired some real good people who had a good background in Information Systems. And our office developed the first computerized fiscal/financial, personnel and student information systems for the University.

I don't know what the State was doing. I can't recall whether -- well, it still wasn't that advanced, either. And surprisingly, those systems stayed in place for about 20 years, you know. With improvements along the way, but the basic systems were the same. So, let's see. I stayed there until -- well, no, I didn't really leave. Anyway, here I learned a lot about Information Systems but my job was more administrative, you know, supervisory, rather than to do the actual work.

Because you don't have to be an expert in that job in that particular function, if you know enough about management and supervision, and you hire the right people, and have them understand what you want done, and then stay out of the way while they get it done -- which has always been my way of, you know, operation. And then, in 1969, I was asked to take on the responsibility for the Budget Office as well. So I had the Management

Systems Office, but the Management Systems Office now also included the Budget Office.

Because, as I said, if you have good people working for you, then the job isn't very difficult. You know, it's one of trying to develop the vision and the goals and making sure that we're making progress on it. But mainly, you've got to stay out of the way and let people do their jobs, you know?

And then, in 1975, the finance director retired and left the University, so he said, "Well, why don't you take that, too?" So at that time, my job changed to Finance director, but it still had the Management Systems and the Budget and now I had all of the accounting, treasury, purchasing, you know, those kinds of functions. And all along, by taking on these different tasks, you know, I learned a lot more about accounting and treasury operations and that kind of thing. So I did that from 1975 to -- let's see, what do my notes say? 'Til 1982.

I transferred to the Manoa Chancellor's Office in 1982 as vice chancellor for administration. *[Sumida went from the UH Systems Office to the UH Manoa Office.]*

I really didn't care to go, but they needed someone who could go and help Marv *[Marvin]* Anderson, you know, get the place settled down and reorganized and systematized again. So from 1982 to 1985 I was the vice chancellor for administration. And, of course, I had responsibility for all the fiscal, personnel, physical plant, parking, security, housing, all these other kinds of things.

One of the interesting things I learned there was -- I learned more about bond financing and how you float bonds to finance construction projects. Like all of the parking structures here, we built with bond funds. And we had to go to New York to sell bonds.

State-backed bonds, but University-issued bonds. And we had a bond council in a big law firm in New York, and I really learned a lot about bond financing from them.

[In 1985] I came back to the System Office, because the Chancellor's Office was gone, and I became the associate vice president for, I think it was, planning, policy and budget. So we were the ones who were responsible for doing the long-range planning for the University, and, of course, the budget for the University. And any policies that you really have to be, you know, developed.

It was learning on the job. I might say that the only job I ever really applied for was my first job after I came back from the Air Force and applied for this -- I looked in the paper, and there was an ad for personnel trainee, so my background was in personnel, industrial relations, so I applied. But after that, it's always been a case of being in the right place at the right time.

Except maybe for the Center, I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. (laughter)

A long time ago I read some book -- I've forgot, now -- but the book said, "Never stay in a job for more than five years, because if you haven't learned everything you need to learn in that new job in five years, then you are probably at a dead end." And the philosophy was, "Stay until you learn everything you can get to learn, and do the job, and then go on to something else."

And so, that's sort of been my philosophy, except that my various changes in jobs were not because of that.

That was my belief, but the opportunity just came for me to take on new assignments and learn new things.

National Task Force for Universities/WICHE

When I was at the University, I did a lot of traveling, because I was on a national task force to develop management systems for universities. That was part of the WICHE [*Western Interstate Compact for Higher Education*].

Well, it started in WICHE, but it became national. It became the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. NCHEMS. And it got to be pretty well-known -- in fact, the head of the NCHEMS, now, came to the University as a consultant to review the University's operations and to make recommendations. That started as a project of WICHE. And it was the University of California at Berkeley, University of Hawai'i, University of Oregon and the University of Colorado.

The business vice presidents for those four organizations got together and said, "Let's all throw in about \$50,000 apiece, to develop a model information system for measuring the results of higher education."

And they appointed the task force, and of course, Richard Takasaki asked me to be on that task force. And when the federal government Office of Education found out about that project, they said, "Look. If you people will include other than western universities in that project, we'll provide the funding."

So instead of the universities putting up money for that project, the federal government gave us a million dollar grant to start that project. So we brought in people from New York and Florida and Chicago and other places so we had a national task force, and we met for several years.

We were headquartered in Boulder, Colorado.

Retirement from the State

So anyway, in 1986, I was 55, and I'd always decided to retire when I was 55 years old, because that's the State's retirement age, at that time. So I retired.

I had a good friend of mine -- who had worked for me, by the way, in the Management Systems Office, a guy named Dan Arita. And Hiram Kamaka, who was the State director of Budget and Finance at that time under *[Governor John A.] Burns*, asked to borrow Dan because he wanted to develop an information system at the State.

So I said, "OK. I'll loan you Dan." And of course, Dan went on there and never came back, because he became head of their Computer Systems. Anyway, Dan, after he quit the State, ended up with a company called Data Systems -- Data House. It's a local computer, you know, information development operation.

So after I retired from the University, Dan *[Arita]* asked me, whether I would be interested in forming a company with him. A subsidiary company and we called it Information Systems Support. And the business there was -- Data Systems develops these information systems -- Data House -- and then this new company would take on the job when people needed help to maintain and run that system. So he and I were partners, and I became president of a new company. And we worked at it for about two years, I guess.

Working for PICHTR

And then Fudge Matsuda, who always keeps on calling me when he wants help with something, called and said, "Can you come to help us develop some better administrative systems at a non-profit organization called PICHTR?" Pacific International Center for High Technology Research.

I really wasn't looking for another job, because I was retired and I was happy doing what I was doing but Fudge is a guy that you can't say no to. He's always prevailing on you to come help with something.

So I went to work at PICHTR as director of administration.

And it was a really easy job, because it was a small organization, and, you know, I had to set up the personnel systems and the purchasing, and you know, finance, accounting, that kind of thing. So I did that for a year, and then I decided to quit again, retire, because they had set up the system, it was working OK.

Institutional Transitions

Joining the EWC

And then Victor Li [*EWC President*] called. He said, "Oh, I understand you're at PICHTR," and so forth, and so on. He says, "Can you come up and help us?" So I came up and spoke with Victor, and I said, "Well, OK, I can come up and help for maybe one or two years." So at the end of 1989 I came up here as director of administration. And I later on found out that Victor didn't know me that well although he knew of me. But it was the people in administration that had told him, "That's the guy you should try to get." And mainly it was Raleigh Aways, who worked for me when I was director of finance at UH. I appointed Raleigh as director of management systems when Dan Arita left. And Raleigh was one of the younger people in the office, and I got all of the senior guys upset when I appointed Raleigh as a director. But to me, Raleigh was bright and honest and hardworking, so I had made him director of management systems. And then Raleigh, later on, went to come to work for the East-West Center for Wes Park. So Raleigh knew me, and he was here, and Myrna Nip had been at the University as a bookstore manager,

so she knew me. So those two mainly, I think, pushed Victor to get me to come up here. So I said, "Well, I'll stay at least a couple of years, maybe." So then I, of course, took on the job of trying to, you know, streamline things and simplify things and so forth. A new challenge and somebody asking for help, and saying, "Oh, OK. Well, I'll go help a little while."

Well, I was familiar with the East-West Center, because when I was at the University in 1975, I was part of a team that worked on that passage of the State law and then on negotiating the agreement that separated the East-West Center from the University. In fact, that's when I first met Lee Jay Cho. Ets [Everett] Kleinjans was president or chancellor, whatever you called him at that time. Lee Jay was -- I don't know what he was, but he was part of the team on this side that worked with us. So that's the first time I got to know him. So anyway, I knew something about the East-West Center as a result of that experience. So I decided, well, OK, I'll come up here and, you know, work for a while.

Interim President (1990-91)

I came in '89, and one year later, he [Victor Li] was gone. And all of a sudden, they looked at me, and they said, you know, "Can you be the interim president?" I said, "Who, me? I'm not academic, you know, I'm here just for the administrative work." And they said, "Well, we need somebody right now, temporarily."

So since it was the interim thing, I decided, well, OK, I'll do that. And so I worked with the Board, of course, in the search for a new president. And as you know, they finally decided to hire Mike Oksenberg.

[President Oksenberg asked Sumida, who was ready to retire when the new president was hired, to stay on as executive vice president during his presidency. Oksenberg served as EWC president from 1992-1995.]

Interim President Again to EWC President (1994-97)

So I went to Bangkok for this meeting, and at four o'clock in the morning I got a call from Oz Stender, and Oz said, "Ken, we talked it over, and we want you to be president again." I said, "Why me?" He said that, "Well, you know, you're somebody we can trust, and we think you can do the job."

So how can you say no? So I came back from Bangkok and took on the interim president job again. That was in December or January, I guess of '95, wasn't it?

And then we began to search for president. And about March we knew we were getting a real big cut in our budget for the following year, 1996. So in 1995, we already knew we were in trouble -- and we were trying to find a new president. And I don't know whether it was Oz or whoever on the Board or how many people on the Board decided that, well, what if we forget about the search for a while and just let Ken be the permanent president.

And then they said, "Nobody's going to come to work for the Center, you know?" And again, I really wasn't interested in -- you know, that wasn't my plan, to be a president of an institution like the East-West Center -- being a non-academic, especially. But when they said that, I said, "OK, well I'll take it on, and deal with the problem of the budget cut."

I realized that, you know, you can't find a president under those conditions.

RIF/Building Support for the Center

So I stayed on. And then, of course, *[there was]* that period in 1996 when we had a series of meetings and everybody -- with the directors and the researchers and -- and the union and, you know, and had to go through the process of laying off people. And later on you ask the question of, "What are some of the most unpleasant things I've done here?" and that is the most unpleasant thing.

As you know we got a more than 50 percent reduction and we had to. It was very difficult, because some of the people that we had to let go were people who worked here for 20 years -- and they were faithful, good workers. You know, the Center was a good place to work at because, with few exceptions, everybody really seemed to work together and like each other and, you know, it was a very pleasant atmosphere to work in. Of course, we had a few exceptions, but there is no point in mentioning names in this point in time.

Raising Awareness of EWC in Congress

So anyway, we got through that, and as you know we worked with a lot of people in the Center to try to promote ourselves in Congress, and I spent a lot of time up in Congress trying to get our budgeting back up to speed, you know.

And backing up, when I came here to work for Victor I had worked at the University, of course. And I had spent a lot of time in Washington because we have a lot of grants and contracts that we get from a lot of different departments and from Congress. So I got to know Washington because I spent a lot of time negotiating contracts and promoting funding and that kind of thing in Washington. So I spent a lot of time speaking to congressmen and staff on the House side of the Appropriations Committee, the subcommittee that handles the East-West Center, and the State Department.

When I was the interim *[president]*. And I did that even when Mike *[Oksenberg]* was here. And Mike knew that that was a good thing to do. And then, of course, I really had to step it up after we got cut. *[Sumida pulled together the Center's D.C. Working Group.]*

And later on, Dan *[Inouye]* said that really did help him -- by trying to get more understanding and support, because when I first walked into the congressman's office or even the senator's office, they would say, "East-West Center? Oh, that's Dan Inouye's pet project."

People didn't realize that the U.S. Congress had created the East-West Center. They had the impression that the East-West Center was a pork barrel item that Dan always fought for. And frankly, Dan told me that -- and I think he really meant it -- the East-West Center, at that time, was his number one priority. He believed so strongly in the East-West Center because he was associated with *[Governor]* John Burns when John Burns got the law passed to create the East-West Center.

But he said, "Ken -- but at the same time, I'm not going to interfere. You guys run the place." But I used to always go seek his advice when I was making changes, doing something -- I'd always go see him first. And he'd say, "Well, that sounds good, but it's up to you."

Anyway, so, you know, after 1996, '97, '98 -- the situation sort of started to change -- and the East-West Center's appropriations started to creep back up again. We were down to about \$10 million from \$24 million or something like that. By the time I left, we were back up to about \$14 million.

Largely due to Senator Inouye's efforts. (laughter) With a little bit of help from me.

But anyway, afterwards, Charles Morrison [*EWC President, 1997-*] told me, "Boy, I didn't realize that you had reduced the fixed costs of the East-West Center so low. And then Charles was able to, then, start to hire more people again, remember?"

He had the resources, now, to do it.

Retirement from EWC

Well, I was going to retire at the end of July, and Charles [*Morrison*] asked me to stay on for one month so that we could have kind of an overlap. And I took Charles with me to Washington, D.C., and introduced him to all of the committee people and so forth, and went through that bit of transitioning.

And there were ... people who were nervous about the transition to a new president but I encouraged them by saying that in supporting Charles you are supporting the Center and if you have any feeling for the Center, you've got to give him your 100 percent support. So we had a good transition, I thought.

But after I left here, I tried not to come back too often, because you know, when an old president leaves and a new president takes over -- it's not good to have the old guy hanging around. And in the military, when you have a change of command, when the new commander takes over for the old commander, the old commander leaves -- he's put on the airplane that night.

To go off to his new assignment -- or his retirement or so forth. Because the same thing -- they don't want the old commander around, because a lot of people -- watching the past always looks better than what's here today or tomorrow. And they kind of associated the past with the old guy, and they keep on, you know, reminiscing, and it's not good for the new guy to have that much presence of the old guy around. So I tended not to be out

here. I don't know if you noticed. Not that I wasn't welcome, you know. Charles would call me every so often and we'd come in and talk.

Best Memories

Well, my best memories are, I guess, when I first became interim president -- and later on, with the president, too.

Because I got to work directly with the institute directors and the researchers -- you know, more directly. Got more involved in their work, and learned a lot.

And it was a real pleasant experience to be working with all of these academics. For a non-academic like me.

I don't know if you recall, when I was at the University, one of the things that I was able to establish a good reputation for is being able to understand the academics and to help them.

If they had a problem, I was the guy that had to find a way to get them out of the problem. Help -- a lot of them have to do with purchasing and, you know, fiscal rules and the regulations that they've violated unintentionally, and then I had to go in and get them bailed out. And in fact, there was a guy named David Yount who wrote a book about the University [*of Hawai'i*] [Title: *Who Runs the University*. [W]hen I looked up my name, David was very nice to me, you know. He said things like, "Ken Sumida was one of the most effective lobbyists for the University at the legislature, because he had credibility down there."

And the thing that struck me, he said, "Ken Sumida was the most academic of the non-academics around the University." And I think he said that because I really listened to and appreciated what they were doing, and I really felt my role was -- the only reason I

had the job was to support the academics -- and that's what I tried to infuse in all the people I worked for, that, you know, don't give those academics a bad time. You know, help them. You know, if they want to do something, find a way for them to do it. So I had the same attitude here, of course, and I really got to know a lot of the academics here. And the opportunity to get to know not only the academics but a lot of the foreign people who came here -- and then, of course, I got the chance to go do a lot of traveling as well. And to get to know all of the people out there. And it really was a good education for me about the importance of international understanding and relations.

[Prior to the East-West Center] my travel was mostly to the mainland *[U.S.]*, you know. But the Center was my first exposure to the -- well, I had a little bit of exposure when we had, you know, visitors from Japan or places like that to the University, but other than that, no.

I had been to Korea and Japan, other places, through my military affiliations but not in this kind of role. So when I look back, that's one of my pleasant memories of the East-West Center, was to work in that kind of environment.

Building Alumni Outreach

The alumni is very active now. And I like to think that I was at the beginning of trying to get all of the alumni back to the Center.

I remember going to meet with the chapters in Japan and Bangkok and other places, and it was surprising that they were so happy to see you and that they wanted to maintain the relationship with the Center. In fact, they were doing it on their own, out there but not so much in contact with us, you know? So yeah, I'm glad you reminded me about that. So

hopefully I contributed in a small way in kind of beginning to bring the alumni back to the Center.

And as far as your question you were just beginning to ask me how do I think I influenced other people? Hopefully, I contributed in some small way to meeting the Center's mission of going out there and meeting people and talking about the Center and you know, helping to establish those kinds of relationships. And I hope I helped to get people in Congress and people in Washington more aware of the East-West Center.

Partnerships and Networks

[Alumni Officer] Gordon *[Ring]* had left...But even when he was gone, we always used to keep in contact. When he was in Florida, yeah.

And in fact, we had this one project with the AID *[U.S. Agency for International Development]*. It was an environmental project working with companies in Asia to promote better environmental practices, you know?

It was a local guy who was in that program on the mainland -- he contacted me and got us involved. Anyway, one project was to get all the food manufacturing companies in Asia together with the food manufacturing companies in the United States to promote more trade between them -- cooperation between them and at the same time, to promote what we call green agriculture. And we sponsored a meeting in Florida and we brought CEOs from the companies in Asia and CEOs from companies in the U.S. together to a meeting. And then I ran into Gordon Ring again -- because he was out there. That reminded me about that. And by the way, that also resulted in my being on the Council for State Governments, which is an organization of state governments -- they're headquartered in

Lexington, Kentucky. They had a contract with AID to give grants to universities and other organizations for doing environmental work with partners in Asia. And because of my position at the East-West Center, although we're not part of the State -- I was asked to serve on the committee that reviewed all the proposals and gave all the grants out.

So I then continued after I left the East-West Center for a little while. But anyway, that was more a state government function. We used to meet in Lexington, you know once or twice a year to review all these proposals. We worked with Seiji Naya and his staff to submit proposals, that resulted in grants to the *[State of Hawai'i]* Department of Business and Economic Development. And so we did some work with the Philippines in better energy systems. And that also gave me an opportunity to travel to some rural villages in the Philippines. And in fact, I was up in Sumatra, *[Indonesia]*. You know where that tidal wave and earthquake took place *[in December 2004]*?

Yeah, tsunami. Up in northern Sumatra? I spent about five days in a village out there one time. You know, because of this particular project. But again, that was because of my connection to the East-West Center that I was asked to serve.

EWC's Impact

EWC Mission

Let me say that the mission of the East-West Center is clearly outlined in the enabling legislation. And no matter how you cut it, that's the mission. So I was going to say that, you know, I like this *[new mission statement]*, but if you look at it, it's really rewording and rephrasing the same mission in a different way. But if you really cut through all of that, the mission is still the same, right?

To promote this understanding and relations between essentially the U.S., the West and Asian countries in the East. And you do it through all of these different programs.

I think the Center has always accomplished the mission, to varying degrees. But -- depending on the funding and depending on the situation.

So yes. I really believe that.

Balancing Education and Research

And the other thing I kind of worry about is that -- talking about balance again -- we need a balance between research and education. Because part of the way you promote better relations and understanding with the people of the nation -- of the country -- of the world is through joint research activities. Working together on issues of mutual interest. And the Center had a very strong research program when I first got here. We had a lot of great people around here getting a lot of grants and doing a lot of research work and the Center was known for its population and environment and you know, economics and cultural work.

And you know, we had all of these institutes, and maybe they may not have been the right way to organize it, but nevertheless, we did have a lot of outstanding researchers with great credibility and ability to get funding from different sources to promote the research part of it, too.

And the research led to findings that led to education, because, you know, you're going to disseminate your findings and that's an educational process, too. So the Center seems to have a very strong educational program. They have a lot of students in leadership programs and seminars and it's great

On Career, Perspectives

Like I said, it really has changed my outlook and made me much more competent in understanding the importance of global education and cultural relationships and that kind of thing.

I just hope that I left the Center in good condition and with people having a positive, you know, outlook on the Center's future. But other than that, I don't know how I influenced people.

How do I want people to remember me? I don't know if I want them to remember.

(laughter)

I guess people remember me as kind of an anomaly, I guess, or oddity, because as I explained at the beginning, here I am, a non-academic person, who you know, people call me a doctor all the time. I don't have a Ph.D., but people call me doctor because they say, "He must have a Ph.D. to be head of the East-West Center," you know?

I guess people remember me as one blip in the Center's history where a non-academic guy who came in and tried to run the Center for a while -- but, on balance, he did a pretty good job of helping the Center to see its way through a difficult period of time, and that way, contributed to the Center. I mean, that's about the only way people remember me, I think.

When people ask me about my background one of the things I point with pride to is my experience with the East-West Center. And then I can start talking about the importance of you know, global education and cultural relationships and how the Center contributes to that and why it's so important, that kind of thing.

Because I believe in the Center. I believe in the work that you all are doing. You know, it was strange -- it was back in 1959 and '58 that the decision-makers foresaw all of this. It

was way before people even knew what globalization meant. And you had [*Governor John*] Burns and [*President Lyndon B.*] Johnson and other people like that, you know kind of saw the need for that kind of relationship for the U.S., especially, in the future.

Life After EWC

Work with Non-Profits

[Kenji Sumida retired as president of the East-West Center in 1998.]

Well, you know, when you retire, people start to call you up. And they say, "Ken, now that you're retired, can you help us?"

So I said, "Well, OK," and actually, I shouldn't have done that. Now, when people retire, I tell them, "When you retire, people are going to start calling you up to ask you, 'Help!' Your answer should be, 'Let me think about it.'" Because what I did was say, "Yes, yes, yes, yes," and pretty soon, I was on the boards of maybe six or seven non-profit organizations, none of them paying jobs, but all demanding some of your time and effort especially when you believe that if you're serving on a board, then you should be contributing or you shouldn't stay on the board.

Right, so. So I ended up on -- I have a list here. (laughter) Well, I had been asked to join the Board of the PAAC, Pacific Asian Affairs Council when I was still a president, because they had come to see me about space.

Because they were at Mid-Pacific Institute at the time, and Mid-Pac needed the space, so they had to leave Mid-Pac. So we had one of the old [*EWC*] cottages that were not being used. It was just all broken down and so I offered that to PAAC, and I said, "If you guys can clean it up, you can use that place."

So they got some contractor to volunteer and he fixed up the place, and it turned out it was worth about \$45,000, the job that they had done. So I negotiated the agreement with PAAC and said, "Well, let's see. \$45,000. That's about, oh, \$5,000 to \$10,000 a year. So I'll give you lease-free for five years in exchange for that [*construction*].

So then they said, "Well, now that you're our landlord, can you serve on our board?" So I joined the board. By the way, when Charles [*Morrison*] took over, I pleaded with Charles to keep them here. And so Charles, bless his heart, when they tore down the cottages, he gave them space up here [*in Burns Hall*] where they're still at. [*PAAC and other groups have space agreements with EWC*]. And PAAC is really good for the East-West Center, because it sort of helps to represent the East-West Center in the community. You know, as I point out now, both the Friends of the East-West Center and PAAC are windows through which the Center can have access to the local community.

So when I retired, I remained on the board of the PAAC, and I'm on the board of -- by the way, I was treasurer of Friends of the East-West Center until a couple of months ago, when they found out there was a term limit, so I'm no longer treasurer of that.

But anyway, I joined the Friends of the East-West Center Board. Remained on the PAAC Board. And of course, I served as president of PAAC the last two years. And then I joined the Japan-America Society where today I'm vice chairman and Program Committee chairman. Then I was on the Credit Union Board, I'm still serving on that board.

And at the University, I was asked to help the Pacific Congress for Marine Research and Education. So I was on that board. And then the dean of the School of Architecture

asked me to serve on his board. He has an organization called the Asia-Pacific Center for Architecture. It's kind of a support group for the School of Architecture.

And one of the things that that support group -- APAC, we call it -- does is help them to put on, every other year, this Asia-Pacific Symposium where they bring in architects from all over the East and the West. And they make awards for design and, you know, give lectures and so forth. So, I said, "Why would you want me to serve on that board when I'm not an architect?" He said, "Exactly. That's exactly why. We only have architects, and we need somebody who knows more about administrative matters." So I serve on that board. And what else?

I don't know how many, but I've since resigned from the *[PACOM]* board. Because their meetings are always someplace in Asia or someplace out -- you have to pay your own way and I just couldn't afford to go do those kinds of things. And if I can't, you know, be active, there's no sense. But when I was on the board, I helped them a lot with the administrative relations with the University because I knew people at the University. But what else do I do?

Oh, the Credit Union has a league and association of all credit unions -- and they needed somebody to chair what they call their Government Affairs Committee. And this is the committee that works with Congress and the legislature and educating policy-makers. You know, serving on the boards of -- you'll notice that most of these organizations that I work with are focused on relations between Hawai'i -- or between the U.S. -- and Asia.

Pacific and Asian Affairs Council Activities

And most of them have a lot of educational programs. PAAC, for example. We have after-school classes, we have PAAC clubs in the high schools, we do work with the community colleges. Thanks to the Freemans [*Freeman Foundation*], we're bringing a bunch of students for summer tours of the different countries. A bunch of students just came back from Vietnam, having spent a couple of weeks in Hanoi and other places. When you hear the students talk about what they gained from it, you really feel gratified that you were able to contribute in a small way to those kinds of things.

And it's fun, these non-profits are fun because -- you know, when I was working at the University or at the East-West Center, and you're paid, and you're working six days a week and 10 hours a day and working your butt off, and nobody seems to appreciate it because they kind of expect that that's your job, you know?

But when you do volunteer work for the non-profits, every little thing you do, they're so happy and gratified that you're doing it. And it's much easier to see the results of your work.

Because you see the students going, you see the students coming back and they say, "Wow, now I'm going to major in International Relations when I go to college." And you know, you can see the impact it's had on them.

Japan-America Society Activities

And that's true also of the Japan-America Society. We do the same kind of things with the Japan-America Society. We have programs at the schools. We call it the Continuum of Education Project. We do work in the elementary schools. The one that's well-known is "Japan in a Suitcase." What we do is we bring volunteers into the elementary schools with a suitcase full of paraphernalia for the elementary school kids in Japan and we show

them how kids dress and what they bring and how they study in Japan. It's very interesting for the kids.

So we have a big demand by teachers for us to give those kinds of presentations to the elementary school kids to give them, you know, a way of another culture, another way of life for students their age. And we do work with high schools, for example. And for the middle schools, we have a program where we bring about 12 to 15 [*Hawai'i*] students each summer to Fukuoka in Japan. 11 years old and below. And the reason it's 11 and below is at 12, the airfare goes up. This is all funded by some people in Japan. And they have this camp in Fukuoka and they have students from 40 countries that come here. All middle school students of the same age. And they allowed us to be part of that program. So the Japan-America Society holds an interview competition and selects 11 students, and we put them through about a month of local seminars and training to get to there, so they will know more about international relations, right? And then they spend the couple of weeks over there in Fukuoka, and including some home stays with Japan families.

So those kinds of programs, you can see right away what the benefits are.

But, as I started to say, my experience here at the East-West Center really helped me to understand the importance of knowing other cultures and the importance of international relations and global education. So I'm able to, I think, contribute more effectively to all of these kinds of organizations because of that -- because of my experience here. So, you know, I'm thinking more globally because of my experience here.

And nowadays I do a lot of work at my church, too.

I'm their Personnel Committee chairman, and I'm their delegate to association meetings and, you know, churches. I'm a cook now, so I cook once every two months, we feed

about 200 people at the River of Life Mission. So we cook, you know, like, hamburger stew, or chili, or that kind of thing. It's fun.

We cook at our church, and we bring it down to the River of Life. So we have a bunch of people who show up maybe every two months. Sometimes maybe a month. And then we chop and fry and cook and -- that kind of thing. So that's how I spend my time.

I play more golf now than I used to when I was at the East-West Center. I used to play only on Saturdays, but now I play once or twice during the week, sometimes -- when people invite me to play.

UH-Related Work

One time I had to head a committee to review the School of Public Health. They were in big trouble, remember?

Our committee recommended that they merge with the [UH] medical school because they had lost so much of their staffing that they were no longer viable as a separate school.

And [Ed] Cadman was on his way to become dean of the medical school and he was at Yale so I called him up at Yale, and he said at Yale, the School of Public Health was part of the medical school. So he said, "Ken, we'd be glad to take over the School of Public Health, but I will work to develop the School of Public Health to the extent that they can become independent again."

So sure enough, when he came, they moved that school to -- that was [UH President] Ken Mortimer that asked me to do that.

So occasionally I do some of that kind of work, yeah. But it's good to be active, you know? It does two things for you. It keeps your mind active and secondly, it keeps you

in contact with a lot of people -- the local business leaders and the educational leaders and politicians and other people. But you still have that contact. Otherwise I'd be sitting at Ala Moana with the rest of the old men just watching people go by. (laughter)