Phil Estermann inherited the spirit of adventure from his father who, when Phil was ten, moved the family to California from Minnesota where it had strong roots. In his college junior year, he studied and traveled in Mexico and Europe and worked in Germany and Spain. He then traveled across northern Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Japan where he got a job on an American ship that gave him passage back home in time to complete his college senior year. After graduate school in 1966, he did research fieldwork in Vietnam as a USAID intern before coming to EWC as a Ph.D. student in 1969. Leaving the Center in 1973, he became an environmental activist and community organizer on Molokai. Another trip to Asia in 1975-77 preceded over a decade with Honolulu City and County and the State of Hawaii. Estermann joined the Center staff in 1991 as Grants Officer in the Center's Research Program where he helps procure outside project funding and develops new projects such as in the areas of human rights and emerging infectious diseases. The work of Estermann and the Center's population research program is described in the chapter "Collaborating on Research" in *The East-West Center Legacy*.

Read Estermann's interview narrative (see separate pdf)

**Personal Background**
- **Life Before EWC** - USAID Program in Vietnam - UH, Late 1960s
- **Life After EWC** - Molokai, Community Organizing - Molokai, ’74-’75, Picking Pineapple
- **Institutional Transitions** - Institutes vs Students/Facilitator Training - Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG), Early 1970s
- **Ties That Last** - Travel in Asia/Work in Hawaii Government, ‘70’s-’80s - Joining EWC Staff, 1990s
- **EWC’s Impact** - Core Experience - Inter-island Tours - Current Work
**Interview Quotes**

“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.”

“In 1969 -- it wasn't my first year at the Center, '69, '70 -- I and two other people [Bill Samways and Phil King] were hired by the Center on a small consultancy to examine the inter-island tour experience... 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.”

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.

LINK (as of 06/12/2020)
[https://www.eastwestcenter.org/research/research-information-services/oral-history-project/philip-estermann](https://www.eastwestcenter.org/research/research-information-services/oral-history-project/philip-estermann)