East-West Center Oral History Project: Puongpun Sananikone

Originally from Laos, **Puongpun Sananikone** was an East-West Center grantee majoring in economics in the mid-1960s, soon after the Center was established. He credits the Center’s cross-cultural environment with shaping both his personal life and his career as an international development economist and business executive who has worked on every continent. In July 2008, Sananikone became the first East-West Center alumnus to be elected chairman of the EWC Board of Governors. Fluent in six languages, Sananikone has held a variety of high-profile professional business positions in various countries. Since 1987, he has headed his own Honolulu-based consulting firm, Pacific Management Resources, or PacMar, Inc., which provides a broad range of economic and technical advisory services to business ventures throughout the Asia-Pacific region. He holds a bachelor’s degree in economics from the University of Hawai‘i and a master’s in economics from the University of Colorado. In 2003 he received the University of Hawai‘i’s Distinguished Alumni Award. (paraphrased from “EWC Board Elects Puongpun Sananikone New Chairman.”)

**Read Sananikone's interview narrative** (see separate pdf)

- **Personal Background**
- **Life at EWC** - Arrival, Mid-1960s - Mid-1960s
- **Life After EWC** - Professional Career - Involvement in EWC, EWCA, Board of Governors
- **EWC’s Impact** - On Career - The Mission - EWC’s Impact on 1960s Alumni - Looking Ahead

**Interview Quotes**
"In doing international consulting work as I do, I am much more equipped because of my EWC experience, perhaps, than other professional peers and competitors of mine who have not had
similar experience in being able to see issues from a cross-cultural perspective. And in overseas consulting work that I do, you often encounter very complex contentious issues that required cross-cultural understanding and sensitivity to resolve."

"But to be able to live together full-time with people of different nationalities and cultures was special -- and in those days, I think the Center made it a point to make sure that physically we were placed in such a way that we did not spend that much time with our own nationals at the Center. We had roommates that came from different countries."

"I think the world, in the long-term, if it's to survive as we know it, has got to find better ways to create more institutions like the East-West Center. Or to support institutions like the East-West Center, not just in the Asia Pacific region, but in other areas like the Middle East, where we cultivate in each human being the ability to see things from the other person's perspective, to promote mutual acceptance, tolerance and mutual respect."

[From acceptance speech for Chairmanship of Board of Governors, 7-11-08]
"And without the Center, I would not be what I am today. Becoming an East-West Center grantee over forty years ago forever altered the course of my life. Not only did I meet and marry my wife Thanh-Lo here at the Center, but I began building the basis of a life and career that are inextricably intertwined with the educational and cross-cultural learning opportunities I had at the Center. I have been fortunate to pursue a highly diversified and professionally rewarding career throughout the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere such as Africa and Central America. I could not have done this without my East-West Center education and the multi-cultural values instilled in me as a result of the wholly unique experience I gained here as a grantee."

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/puongpun-sananikone