

East-West Center Oral History Project: Kenji Sumida



Kenji Sumida

Kenji Sumida served as President of the East-West Center from 1995 to 1997. Appointed by the Board of Governors upon the departure of President Michel Oksenberg, Sumida shepherded EWC through a 50% reduction-in-force when Congress reduced the budget from \$24 to \$10 million. By 1997, Sumida and his management team had reduced fixed costs to within the bounds of the \$14 million Congressional allotment for that year. During his tenure Sumida also worked to raise Congress's awareness of Center resources and to re-energize the Center's relationship with its alumni. Born in Honolulu, Sumida graduated from UH with a BA in industrial relations and flew for the U.S. Air Force. In 1964 Sumida began a long career at UH, retiring in 1986 as the system's Associate Vice-President for Planning, Policy, and Budget. In 1989, at the invitation of President Victor Li, Sumida joined EWC as Director of Administration. He subsequently served as Vice-President of Administration under Michel Oksenberg. After retiring in 1997, Sumida continues to support EWC, most recently as President of the Friends of the EWC from 2008 - 2010, and community education about Asia as an active member of the Pacific Asian Affairs Council and the Japan-America Society.

Read Sumida's interview narrative (see separate pdf)

- **Personal Background**
- **Life Before EWC** - City Government - University of Hawai'i - National Task Force for Universities/WICHE - Retirement from the State - PICHTR
- **Institutional Transitions** - Joining the EWC - Interim President (1990-91) - Interim President Again to EWC President (1994-97) - RIF/Building Support for the Center - Raising Awareness of EWC in Congress - Retirement from EWC - Best Memories - Building Alumni Outreach
- **Partnerships and Networks**
- **EWC's Impact** - EWC Mission - Balancing Education and Research - On Career, Perspectives

- **Life After EWC** - Work with Non-Profits - Pacific and Asian Affairs Council Activities
- Japan-America Society Activities - UH-Related Work

Interview Quotes

"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. 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, who kind of saw the need for that kind of relationship for the U.S., especially, in the future."

"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."

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 05/15/2020)

<https://www.eastwestcenter.org/research/research-information-services/oral-history-project/kenji-sumida>