

East-West Center Oral History Project: Larry Smith



Larry Smith

Larry Smith was born in Arkansas but his eyes were opened to the world when he answered President Kennedy's call to service and joined the Peace Corps. He served as an English teacher in Thailand for 4-1/2 years and then came to the University of Hawai'i to do an advanced degree. In 1970 he was invited to join the EWC staff to develop and implement programs for English as a Foreign Language administrators from Asian institutions. Intending to stay only a year or two, he became a research associate with the Culture Learning Institute and later the Institute for Culture and Communication, studying the concept of World Englishes and leadership training. He ultimately retired from EWC in 1999 as Director and Dean of the Education Program. After leaving the Center, Smith established his own consulting firm, Christopher, Smith & Associates LLC, specializing in leadership education. From 2006-2008, he served as President of the Friends of the East-West Center.

Read Smith's interview narrative (see separate pdf)

- **Personal Background**
- **Life Before EWC** - Peace Corps, Thailand - Attending UH
- **Life at EWC** - Joining the Staff, 1970 - Institute of Technical Interchange - Culture Learning Institute - Institute of Culture and Communication - Conference on World Englishes - Tu-Wei Ming - Oksenberg Presidency
- **EWC's Impact** - On Career - On Family - Education Program - Best Memories - Negative Memories - The Mission
- **Institutional Transition** - EWC Presidents
- **Life After EWC** - Leadership Education - International Association for World Englishes - Work with World Englishes - Looking Forward

Interview Quotes

"*[In the Culture Learning Institute]* we were always arguing about what is culture. What does it mean? What do you mean by culture learning? Is it possible to learn another culture? Can one become bi-cultural as well as bilingual? If you become bilingual, do you become bi-cultural? All those kinds of questions. It was quite a dynamic place and it was very interesting."

"And in 1978, I had organized a conference called English as an International Auxiliary Language. And then as a result of the conference, we began to talk about varieties of English which led to the concept of world Englishes and I worked with a colleague at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Braj Kachru, who was doing something very similar at the University of Illinois, and we worked with Edwin Thumboo from National University of Singapore who was doing something very similar in Singapore and we brought this group together at the East-West Center to discuss this. Mary Bitterman was very positive, as had been Verner Bickley about this looking at the phenomenal spread of English and then the consequences of that spread."

"Well, certainly I had a very close relationship with many students. That was valuable for me. Very valuable. And *[a]* tremendous contribution to me personally, as I mentioned earlier. I decided that I needed to leave the Center so that I could spend more time doing the kinds of things that I had learned from these students."

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/larry-smith>