

East-West Center Oral History Project: Gordon Ring



Gordon Ring

Gordon Ring came to EWC in 1963 as a grantee and studied Chinese history at UH. After his grant ended, he spend the summer as a dishwasher in the EWC cafeteria which surprised many of his Asian friends. His professional career with EWC began in 1969 as Public Affairs assistant which included serving as the EWC photographer, developing his own film and caring for the dark room. He quickly moved into the Chancellor/President's office where, from 1971-1983, he served as assistant to three Presidents: Everett Kleinjans, Lee-Jay Cho, and Victor Li. Ring is best known as the Center's Alumni Officer, serving from 1983-1993 and again from 1999 to the present (2010). From his President's Office perspective, he vividly describes the political and emotional tug-of-war during the 1975 EWC incorporation. Ring met his future wife Milly during EWC staff lunchtime tennis matches down at the UH courts.

Read Ring's interview narrative (see separate pdf)

- **Personal Background**
- **Life at EWC** - The Mid-'60s - Joining Staff, 1969 - Assistant to Kleinjans - Alumni Officer, 1983-93, 1999-present - Hale Manoa/Hale Kuahine, '60s - Jefferson Hall, '60s - Student Body, Mid-'60s - Vietnam War Years - Benji Bennington
- **Institutional Transitions** - Separation from UH
- **Ties That Last** - Alumni Network
- **EWC's Impact** - The Mission - Impact in Asia, Pacific - Professional Impact

Interview Quotes

"...every once in a while is you get East-West Center alumni on two different sides of an issue. Some years ago, when Indonesia was becoming independent, and Singapore was becoming independent, there was quite a political flap over what was going to happen to those two areas. Didin Sastrapradja, who is one of our Distinguished Alumni, was involved in the discussions.

And he noted that one of the reasons they were able to help resolve the situation was the fact that there were two East-West Center alumni, one on each side of the issue, and they were able to work something out. I think things like this happen rather frequently. We don't always hear about them, of course. But, I think, in a practical way the Center is kind of lived out in the lives of many of our alumni."

"Our network of 50,000 alumni really expands the outreach of the Center throughout the region, and it's not just the 21 acres with the buildings that are located here in Honolulu, but in fact the East-West Center is everywhere you go in Asia. Because wherever you go, you meet East-West Center alumni. And if you happen to be a fellow alum, our alumni know that by getting in touch with another alum somewhere, you're going to have a bit of extra help and support and guidance and advice that you wouldn't get otherwise. And so it's a very marvelous network of colleagues that we've been working to establish."

"Initially the Hale Manoa dorm was designated a "High Rise" and the Hale Kuahine dorm was called "Low Rise," based on their general height levels. And we called them that throughout the time that we were at the Center, even though eventually they were given the names Hale Manoa and Hale Kuahine. So all the buildings were brand new and just opening up. Lincoln Hall, which was built as a guest facility, was in fact used as a library and office space during the '60s. So when you went into the library you could literally find books in the bathtubs, for example. Of course the two dorms were used as dorms, but they were rather strictly organized by gender, so that Hale Kuahine was strictly for females and Hale Manoa was largely all for males, although there was, I believe, part of one floor -- the third floor -- which was designated for females. But they were not allowed to mix."

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/gordon-ring>