

## East-West Center Oral History Project: Brent Watanabe



Brent Watanabe

**Brent Watanabe** was born and raised in Hawaii. In 1973, he was married and going to graduate school in counseling and guidance at the University of Hawaii when he took a job at the East-West Center as an Off-Campus Housing Specialist. Over the next thirty-five plus years, Watanabe has served as Housing Facilities and Services Officer, Housing Administrative Officer, and Housing Administrator. In 2001 he became Administrator of Support Services, overseeing management of the entire Center campus. Watanabe gives us a history of the Center's housing and facilities offices and staff, and its campus. Watanabe focuses on unique aspects of the East-West Center campus such as its buildings designed by the now world-renowned I.M. Pei and the evolution of its landscaping, and of the special challenges of managing a multi-cultural student residence.

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

- **Personal Background**
- **Life at EWC** - Off-Campus Housing - EWC Facilities and Services - Housing in the '90s - Housing and Support Services from 2001 - I.M. Pei and the EWC Complex - The Dorms - In the '60s - In the '70s - Resident Policy - 1980s: Introducing IT to EWC - Closing the Dorms/Asbestos Removal
- **Institutional Transitions** - Separation From UH - The Imin Conference Center - 1990s : RIF, Internet and Email - Late 1990s: RIF 2 - Post-9/11 Adjustments/Upgrades in 2000 - The Japanese Garden - Hale Halawai and the Friendship Circle - EWC Campus: UH Ownership of Land
- **EWC's Impact**
- **Ties That Last**

### **Interview Quotes**

"The Hale Halawai and Friendship Circle landscaping project is something I feel good about. In 2001, when I first became responsible for the support services unit, I was given the unenviable task to present to Center staff a plan to raze a number of old wooden cottages and to provide a parking lot, in the area between Hale Manoa and Burns Hall. ... And it was through a collaborative process that we formulated how we wanted to proceed. Basically we wanted to maintain as much green space as possible - maintain the Friendship Circle, trees, provide a substitute activities building and provide additional parking. We were very fortunate to obtain the services of well-known landscape professionals, Leland Miyano and Jason Umemoto, who came up with a design which I think all of us can be very proud of. We were able to keep our grass lawn and provide temporary parking for Center functions. This was accomplished by plastic pavers that were installed underneath the grass to provide support for parking. We have a beautiful garden area that people can use. And finally we have an activities center called Hale Halawai, which is very, very popular."

**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/brent-watanabe>