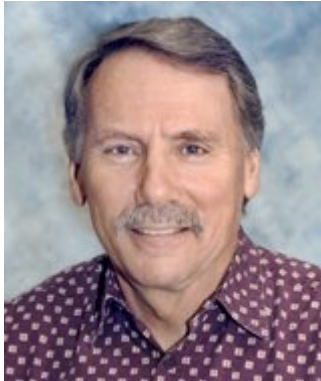


East-West Center Oral History Project: Bob Retherford



Bob Retherford

Bob Retherford, Coordinator of the Research Program's Population and Health study area, was a sociology graduate student and social activist at UC Berkeley in the 1960s when a Population Council fellowship led him into the field of population studies. Paul Demeny, director of the newly-founded East-West Population Institute, later recruited him, along with fellow Berkeley PhD students Griff Feeney, Bob Gardner, and Geoff McNicoll. This was 1970, when USAID funding was abundant and new demographic methods were being developed. Retherford recalls the beginnings of the Summer Seminar, founded by Demeny, and the series of census conferences started by Lee-Jay Cho, both of which are still going strong. In 1974, when Cho became Institute director, Retherford became assistant director for professional education and, later, assistant director for graduate study. Retherford describes the evolution of the India project, his major project for 25 years, involving collaborative analyses of census data and two India-wide National Family Health Surveys. He also describes the Institute's work on China, initiated by Cho, and mentions the work of several other of his fellow population and health researchers and collaborators. For a detailed account of the Center's work in population see "Collaborating on Research" in *The East-West Center Legacy*.

Read Retherford's interview narrative (see separate pdf).

- **Personal Background**
- **Life at EWC** - Postings in Asia - Population Institute, 1970s - Summer Seminar on Population - Population Institute/Assistant Director for Graduate Study - Population Institute/UH Ties
- **Institutional Transitions** - Separation of Education & Research Programs
- **Intellectual Innovations** - Census Conferences - India Project - National Family Health Survey - China Project - National Transfer Accounts Project - NIH Grant/Low Fertility & Population Aging - Health-Related Projects - Evolutionary Aspects of Population

Changes - Best Memories/India Project - Best Memories/Population Limericks - Best Memories/Population Parties

- **EWC's Impact** - On Career, Perspectives
- **EWC Mission**

Interview Quotes

"Paul Demeny was a great director. He started the [Population] Institute off with a bang. We had a lot of money. I became, very quickly, an affiliate graduate faculty in Sociology UH, to help with the population studies program at the University, which Paul actually started, in cooperation with several University social science departments and the School of Public Health."

"At that time we relied heavily on census data. But the censuses didn't ask very many questions. So there wasn't that much there. So Lee-Jay's insight was, "Let's start these census conferences." We had the money. We had this big AID grant. And AID was interested in data for development. Lee-Jay's scheme was, you had the census conference and immediately, you have a network of the major data producers in Asia. We could help them, and they could help us."

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/robert-retherford>