



Manzanar Cemetery, Winter 2002.

This booklet was developed by the park rangers at Manzanar National Historic Site in partnership with the individuals profiled and their families.



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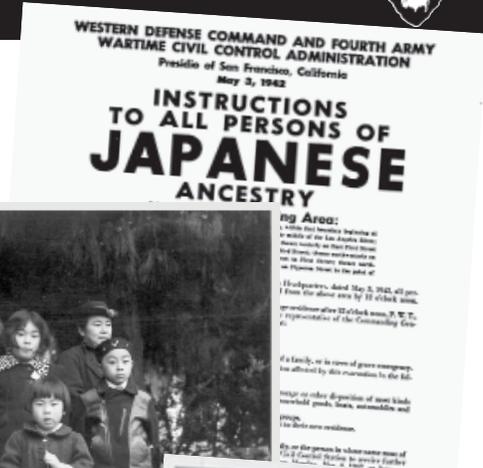
**Manzanar National Historic Site**  
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# Manzanar



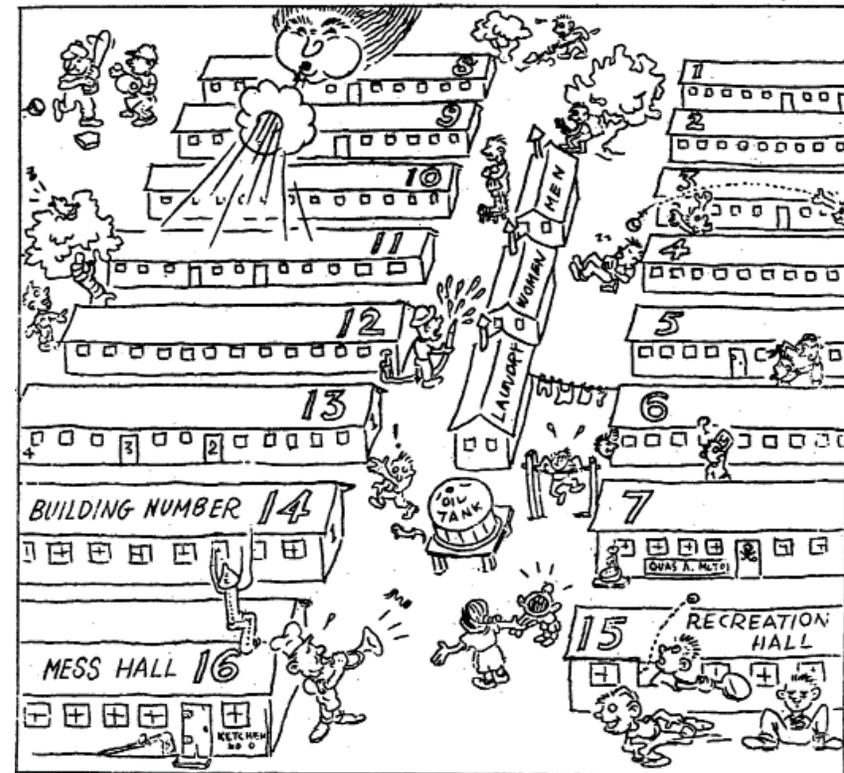
## ID Card





In 1942 the United States Government ordered over 110,000 men, women, and children to leave their homes and detained them in remote, military-style camps. Two-thirds of them were born in America. Not one was convicted of espionage or sabotage.

In this booklet, you will read the story of a person who lived this history, in his or her own words.



## LIFE IN A MANZANAR BLOCK

### Wind and Dust

This wind and dust I have to bear  
 How hard it blows I do not care.  
 But when the wind begins to blow –  
 My morale is pretty low.  
 I know that I can see it through  
 Because others have to bear it too.  
 So I will bear it with the rest  
 And hope the outcome is the best.

-- George Nishimura, age 16 (1943)

# MANZANAR Free Press

## MANZANAR

**Location:** Inyo County, California, at the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada.

### **Environmental**

**Conditions:** Temperatures can be over 100 degrees in summer and below freezing in winter. Strong winds & dust storms are frequent.

**Acreage:** 6,000

**Opened:** March 21, 1942 as a Reception Center and June 1, 1942 as a War Relocation Center.

**Closed:** November 21, 1945

**Max. Population:** 10,046 (September 1942)

**Demographics:** Most internees were from the Los Angeles area, Terminal Island, and the San Fernando Valley. Others came from the San Joaquin Valley and Bainbridge Island.



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## **JUN OKIMOTO**

**Family # 3690**

**Camp: Manzanar, CA**

**Address: 31-1-4**

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*Jun Okimoto*

We lived in Glendale, California, before we were evacuated to Manzanar War Relocation Center. My father was a gardener and my mother ran a boarding house for men working at the fruit stands and as gardeners. I attended Hoover High School and participated in football and track.

When we were evacuated to Manzanar we were allowed only two suitcases or packages that we could carry. Our family had to abandon household goods, such as ice box, stove, furniture, etc. I turned in my .22 caliber rifle to the Glendale police department.

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We were sent to Manzanar on brand new school buses from a train station in Glendale. A military policeman was assigned to each bus. We became friends and ate sack lunch together. When we pulled into camp, people were lined up to see us come in. They looked all grimy and looked terrible as there was no greenery, just dust and wind.

**WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY  
WARTIME CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION**

Presidio of San Francisco, California  
May 3, 1942

**INSTRUCTIONS  
TO ALL PERSONS OF  
JAPANESE  
ANCESTRY**

**Living in the Following Area:**

All of that portion of the City of Los Angeles, State of California, within that boundary beginning at the point at which North Figueroa Street meets a line following the middle of the Los Angeles River; thence westerly and following the said line to East First Street; thence westerly on East First Street to Alameda Street; thence southerly on Alameda Street to East Third Street; thence southerly on East Third Street to Main Street; thence southerly on Main Street to First Street; thence northwesterly on First Street to Figueroa Street; thence northwesterly on Figueroa Street to the point of beginning.

Pursuant to the provisions of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 33, this Headquarters, dated May 3, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above area by 12 o'clock noon, P. M., Saturday, May 9, 1942.  
No Japanese person living in the above area will be permitted to change residence after 12 o'clock noon, P. M., Saturday, May 3, 1942, without obtaining special permission from the representative of the Commanding General, Southern California Sector, at the Civil Control Station located at:

Japanese Union Church,  
125 North San Pedro Street,  
Los Angeles, California.

Such permits will only be granted for the purpose of uniting members of a family, or in cases of grave emergency. The Civil Control Station is equipped to assist the Japanese population affected by this evacuation in the following ways:

1. Give advice and instructions on the evacuation.
2. Provide services with respect to the management, leasing, sale, storage or other disposition of most kinds of property, such as real estate, business and professional equipment, household goods, boats, automobiles and livestock.
3. Provide temporary residence elsewhere for all Japanese in family groups.
4. Transport persons and a limited amount of clothing and equipment to their new residence.

**The Following Instructions Must Be Observed:**

1. A responsible member of each family, preferably the head of the family, or the person in whose name most of the property is held, and each individual living alone, will report to the Civil Control Station to receive further instructions. This must be done between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Monday, May 4, 1942, or between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Tuesday, May 5, 1942.
2. Evacuees must carry with them on departure for the Assembly Center, the following property:
  - (a) Bedding and linens (no mattress) for each member of the family.
  - (b) Toilet articles for each member of the family.
  - (c) Extra clothing for each member of the family.
  - (d) Sufficient knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls and cups for each member of the family.
  - (e) Essential personal effects for each member of the family.

All items carried will be securely packaged, tied and plainly marked with the name of the owner and numbered in accordance with instructions obtained at the Civil Control Station. The size and number of packages is limited to that which can be carried by the individual or family group.

3. No pets of any kind will be permitted.
4. No personal items and no household goods will be shipped to the Assembly Center.
5. The United States Government through its agencies will provide for the storage, at the sole risk of the owner, of the more substantial household items, such as telephones, washing machines, pianos and other heavy furniture. Cooking utensils and other small items will be accepted for storage if crated, packed and plainly marked with the name and address of the owner. Only one name and address will be used by a given family.
6. Each family, and individual living alone, will be furnished transportation to the Assembly Center or will be authorized to travel by private automobile in a supervised group. All instructions pertaining to the movement will be obtained at the Civil Control Station.

Go to the Civil Control Station between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M., Monday, May 4, 1942, or between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M., Tuesday, May 5, 1942, to receive further instructions.

J. L. DeWITT  
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army  
Commanding

SEE CIVILIAN EXCLUSION ORDER NO. 33

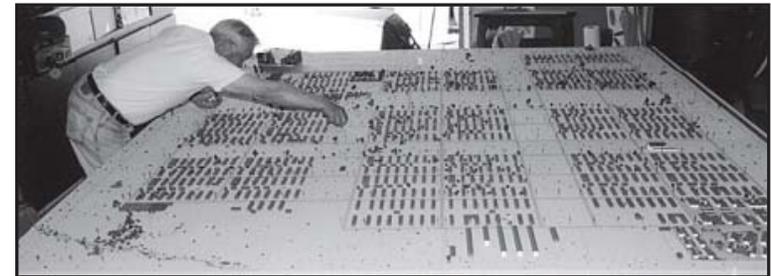
*Evacuation poster, 1942*

Our Class of 1943 was the first to graduate from Manzanar High School. Our graduation was held outdoors at one of the firebreaks as there was no facility large enough.

**I was a terrible student, being incarcerated I felt there was no future.**

**A "Model" Citizen**

In Spring 2004, Jun joined a dozen of his friends from the Manzanar High School classes of 1943, 1944, and 1945 to create a detailed scale model of the camp. Together, they volunteered over a thousand hours. Today, the model is permanently on display at Manzanar National Historic Site.



*Sam Ono (Class of 1944) puts the finishing touches on the West Firebreak.*



*Jun (front left) & his fellow model makers*

As I grew up as a youngster I hated being Japanese. I hated everything to do with Japanese: Japanese dancing, martial arts, Japanese school, Japanese customs. I hated my parents for being Japanese because there was so much prejudice. I wanted to be white. I wish I had been born white.



*Jun Okimoto, 2004*

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**I hated being Japanese. I hated everything to do with Japanese . . . I hated my parents for being Japanese because there was so much prejudice. I wanted to be white.**

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I was a terrible student. Being incarcerated, I felt there was no future. I skipped classes until Mr. Murakami, our truant officer, caught me. If it wasn't for Mr. Murakami, I probably would not have graduated.



*Arriving at Manzanar, 1942*

My favorite teacher was Mrs. Pusey, she taught Social Studies. Her home is where the Kentucky Derby is held. She talked about horses and even wagered on horses, that caught my attention and made the class interesting.

The best thing that happened to me was when

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**The best thing that happened to me was when a boys club, the Manzaknights, was formed. We had over 50 boys in our club and three advisors...**

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a boys club, the Manzaknights, was formed. We had over 50 boys in our club and three advisors: Shiro (Shi) Nomura, Joe (Mexican) Okabe and Yo Ishida.

Athletics was one of the most important activities in camp. We had one hardball (baseball) team coached by Min Watanabe, softball teams and just about everyone got to play basketball, even me. Most of our uniforms were ordered through Sears Roebuck catalog (our wish book).

Manzanar is where I learned to date girls and we taught each other how to jitterbug (western swing) and dance. A talent show was put on by our club in one of the mess halls, we charged 25 cents, it was a huge success. With the proceeds our club sponsored a movie night at the fire break where our high school graduation was held. The movie was "Higher and Higher" with Frank Sinatra, when he sang "The Music Stopped" all the girls swooned.

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**Manzanar  
is where I  
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*Basketball at Manzanar, 1943*



*A mess hall dance, 1942*

In summer of 1944, I had the opportunity to leave camp to work as a gardener at Medinah Country Club in Illinois, 20 miles west of Chicago. If it wasn't for the evacuation I would never have had the opportunity to leave Glendale, California. I had to stop in Chicago, the tall buildings, the activities of a big city, I got to see everything in a different perspective. When my contract for the summer was over I returned to camp.

Soon after, I permanently relocated to Kenosha, Wisconsin, working in a furniture factory making army cots. World War II soon ended and I was out of a job, came back to California and worked as a gardener and eventually started Unique Plant Rentals, renting live plants to office buildings, restaurants, banks, etc.