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
P.O. Box 426, Independence, CA 93526
Tel. 760-878-2194
E-mail: manz_superintendent@nps.gov

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3/08

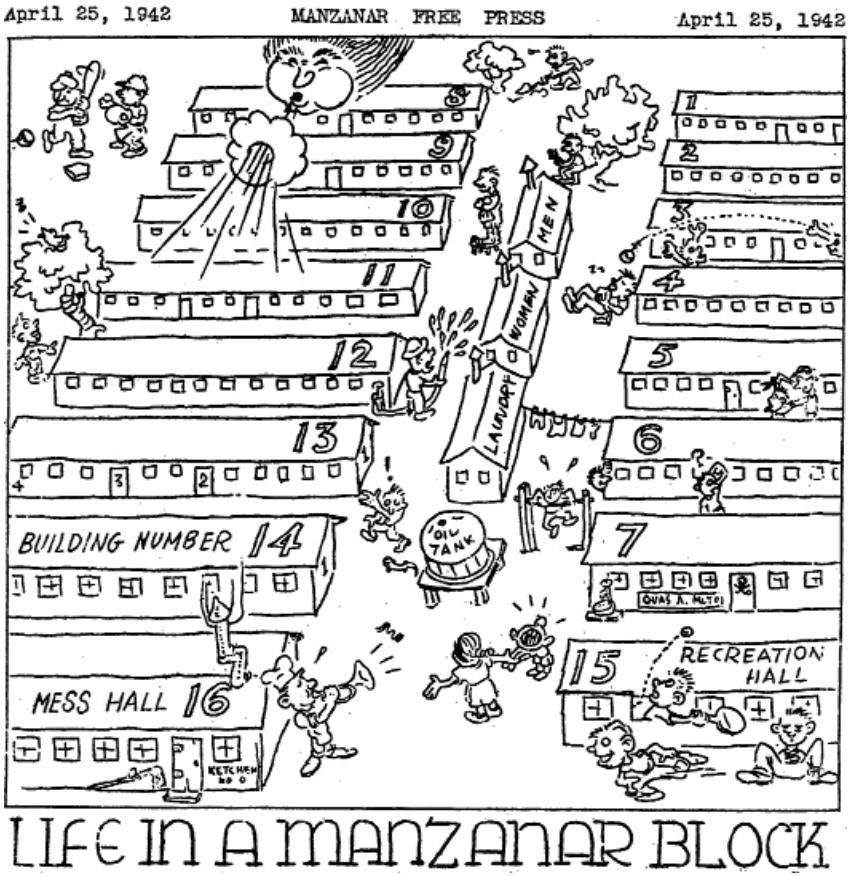
EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

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.



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)

TOPAZ

Location: Millard County, 16 miles NW of Delta, UT.

Environmental Conditions: elevation 4600 ft, within the Sevier Desert – high desert brush with high winds and temperatures ranging from 106 degrees in summer to –30 degrees in winter.

Acreage: 19,800

Opened: September 11, 1942

Closed: October 31, 1945

Max. Population: 8,130 (March 17, 1943)

Demographics: Internees were primarily from the San Francisco Bay Area, predominantly from Tanforan Assembly Center.

DAISY UYEDA SATODA

Camp: Topaz, UT
Address: 9-10-A-B-C

My father Mitsuzo Uyeda was 20 when he arrived in Hawaii from Kumamoto, Japan, in 1899. My mother Matsuye Moriyama was born in Oahu, Hawaii, in 1892. Her parents had left Kumamto the year before with the 17th wave of Japanese immigrants to come to Hawaii.

My father owned a number of unsuccessful grocery stores and restaurants. Our family of thirteen (nine girls, two boys) was living in Oakland on December 7, 1941. I was 14 years old, and with my girl friends Marty and Seiko had gone to the movies that fateful Sunday. The film was interrupted and an announcement made for all servicemen to return immediately to their bases. On the way home we saw the headlines in the *Oakland Tribune*, with four-inch letters screaming "JAPS BOMB PEARL HARBOR!" We were frightened and ran home.

FBI agents came to our house and arrested my father.

A few months later, several FBI agents came to our house and arrested my father. My mother had already packed a change of clothing and a toilet kit, since leaders of Japanese American communities all over the west coast were being rounded up and imprisoned. The younger children threw their arms around Papa's legs and begged the agents not to take their father away. They took him away in handcuffs. That was one of the

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:

saddest days of our lives. The next day, the *Oakland Tribune* article read that a Mitsuzo Uyeda, leader of the Military Virtue Society of Japan, had been taken into custody (there never was such an organization).

Our classmates at Lincoln Junior High School were mostly Chinese Americans, and soon wore badges stating, "I am a Chinese," to distinguish them from us Japanese, who had become the new "Yellow Peril." I was class secretary. Roy Kurotsuchi, the only other Japanese American in the class, was president. I was ready to graduate junior high, but had to leave in May of 1942, when evacuation orders were posted.

Mom sold most of our household furniture for about $50. The Japanese Oakland Methodist Church stored the belongings of church members in their auditorium. We were very fortunate that a Caucasian member of our church, Lee Mullis, and his father kept watch over the church and the stored items, so when we returned to Oakland after the war, everything was intact. There was no vandalism.

In preparation for our incarceration, Mom spent three days and nights of sewing, cooking, packing and such for the remaining members of our family to join her. We lived in rented apartments for several years. I found a job as a clerk-typist with the American Red Cross, which was one of the few companies that would hire Japanese Americans at that time.

People were suspicious of the returning Japanese. There were still several hundred discriminatory laws in effect against Asians, and additional laws specifically against the Japanese. It was not until the 1950s that native Japanese were able to apply for American citizenship, could buy property in their own names, and live wherever they chose.

Because Kaye and I were the only ones working to support my parents and four youngest siblings I could not go to college for three years, when I enrolled at San Francisco Junior College. I attended for only two years, went back to work, married and raised three children. I did not return to school until 40 years later. I am majoring in Humanities and Asian American Studies. I took a leave of absence from school to work on a book about our camp experience, called *From Our Side of the Fence – Growing Up in America's Concentration Camps,* published in 2000. The eleven writers were ages four to 19 while incarcerated. We gave about 20 readings of this book to audiences throughout California, many of whom were not aware of our incarceration during World War II.

We feel it is important to document these stories so a gross miscarriage of justice to an innocent group of people will never again happen in this country.

The best thing that came out of this was that we were able to take leadership positions in student activities and varsity sports, plays, yearbook, school newspaper – opportunities not always available to us in the predominantly white world we had come from. Our class formed an extremely close bond of friendship and support. School was our social life. We could not visit in each other's homes because entire families generally lived in only one room. We had dances and special assemblies with talented students performing.

Our Topaz High Class of 1945 meets at least annually. Our class received a grant to write its unique story about friendship and bonding while spending the entire high school years in a concentration camp during World War II. The book, based on about 50 oral history interviews of class members, was published in 2003, and is entitled, *Blossoms in the Desert*.

Our class formed an extremely close bond...

Topaz officially closed on October 31, 1945. Everyone had to move out by that time. The resettlement years were extremely difficult for most returnees. Very few people had owned their homes before the war, and therefore most had no place to return to. People who left camp earlier had moved to the Midwest and East, as we were not allowed to return to the West Coast until January 1, 1945. People had no money, jobs were scarce and housing was expensive. After the camps were closed, my sister Kaye, helped open the War Relocation Authority office in San Francisco, to help people get settled. She called the twelve of us, and she collapsed on the day we were to report for our move to the Tanforan Assembly Center, at the racetrack in San Bruno. She and my sister Flo were allowed to rest up for one day before joining us.

Tanforan was a temporary holding area, where we joined about 8,000 other Japanese from the San Francisco Bay Area for the next four months. Our family was fortunate in that we were assigned to live in tarpapered barracks

Horse stalls and barracks at Tanforan Assembly Center, 1942

rather than the filthy, manure-laden horse stable. There was no furniture, save for 12 metal cots. We were given cotton bags and sent to a straw pile to fill up these bags, which were to be our mattresses.

We were fed in a huge room under the grandstands. Food was ladled out from galvanized tubs. It was horrible and most of us had dysentery for much of the time we were in Tanforan. The cooks were fellow inmates and most of them had no cooking experience, especially with American cuisine.

We used to hang out at the "Rec Hall" which the older people organized and staffed to keep the young people occupied with crafts, dancing and educational activities. Wanting to establish some sense of order and normalcy, concerned college graduates and students organized school of a sort, classes held in the grandstand of the racetrack, each grade separated by a few empty rows. It was mostly lectures on any given subject. We did not have textbooks. On Saturdays, the same grandstand was used for camp-wide talent shows, and on Sundays for church services. The Protestants were on one side, Buddhist on the other, and Catholics in the center.

The most humiliating experience shared by most females was the lack of privacy in the bathrooms. Toilet seats were all in a row and back to back. Shower stalls had no curtains. Everything was communal. We spent half of our time waiting in lines – to eat in the mess halls, to go to the bathroom, to take a bath, to wash our clothes, and for twice daily head counts.

Toilet seats were all in a row and back to back. Shower stalls had no curtains.

Our family sent pleas of hardship to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and the FBI for my father's release. He was released from custody and joined us in Tanforan.

After a three-day train ride, we reached Delta, Utah, on September 22, 1942. Army trucks took us to Topaz, dubbed "The Jewel of the Desert." The fine silt of the alkali soil seemed to kick up in a sandstorm every afternoon, sifting through our barracks, our nostrils, our mouths – everything! About 8,200 people were sent

Topaz War Relocation Center, Utah

to Topaz from Tanforan and the Santa Anita Racetrack assembly center near Los Angeles. Each block of about 300 people had a mess hall and a combination laundry room and separate bathrooms for men and women. Each barracks room had only cots and a potbelly iron stove, which we filled with charcoal when it was available. Our large family of 13 was assigned to three rooms. Any furniture we had was made from scrap lumber we found after the buildings were completed. The winters were very cold – minus 30 degrees and the summer highs were about 115 degrees. Our buildings were not insulated. Being used to the mild climate in the San Francisco area, we were quite unprepared and did not have appropriate clothing for the harsh winters.

The junior and senior high school was hastily established in October. We took over the entire Block 32. In our classrooms, we sat eight to a mess hall table. Most of the faculty, which included a number of Japanese Americans, lacked teaching credentials, but a number of teachers were truly concerned and did their best to create a semblance of high school life for us. Since we did not have laboratories, the science class teachers did experimenting as the students watched. We shared books and had very little homework.