



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.



The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. To learn more about your national parks, visit the National Park Service website at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov). To learn more about Manzanar National Historic Site, please visit our website at [www.nps.gov/manz](http://www.nps.gov/manz).

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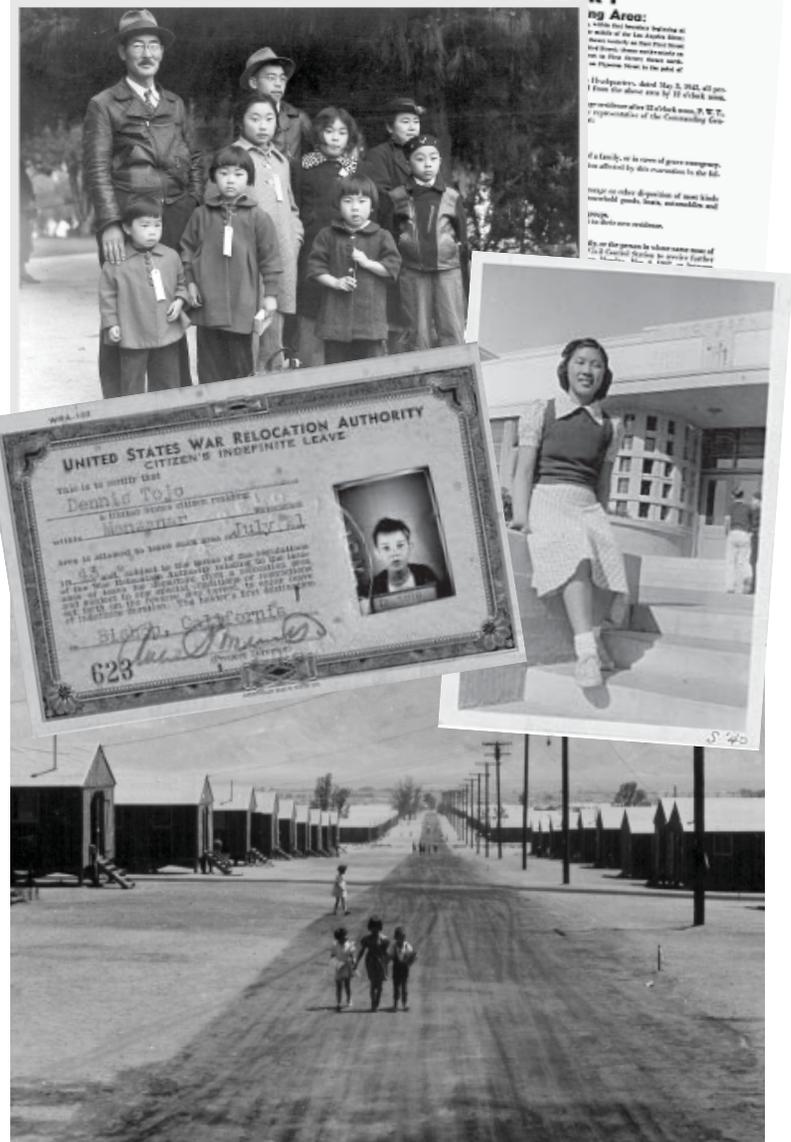
# Manzanar



## ID Card

WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY  
 WARTIME CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION  
 Presidio of San Francisco, California  
 May 3, 1942

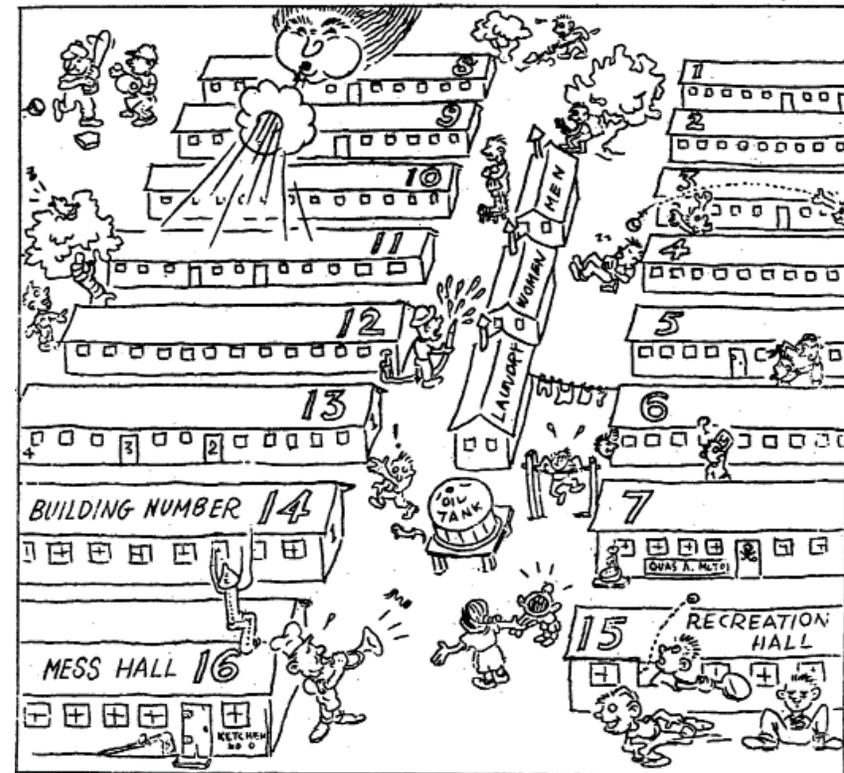
### INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY





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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## **LaPRIEL STRONG BUSH**

**Camp: Manzanar, CA**

**Address: 7-9-1 & K-1**

**Administrative Housing**

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When I was 11, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Even as a kid, I noticed the headlines warning of possible Japanese submarines off the California coast. Would the mainland be next? Were Japanese spies lurking in our midst? That

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**Would the mainland be next? Were Japanese spies lurking in our midst?**

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was the sentiment that gave rise to the idea of relocating Japanese American residents to inland camps.

Some Caucasians were also relocated. My father, Dr. W. Melvin Strong, became director of adult education at Manzanar War Relocation Camp, and we were on our way.

My father wrote a pamphlet, entitled "Why Relocate," that attempted to explain the phenomenon to Caucasian and *Nisei* residents alike.

I remember the long bus ride across the Nevada desert from Salt Lake City to Manzanar, in southern California. We had sold our house and most of our possessions, except for an old piano that made the journey with us (I still have it today). We all looked forward to a great adventure in a historic setting, and to helping the war effort.

I remember my first view of the camp: The distinctive rock-walled entrance station, guard towers, barbed wire fence, but most of all the dramatic rise of the mountains all around. It was a stark, but spectacular setting.

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We moved into our barrack, and settled into a routine. My father insisted I attend school up the road in Independence, even though some of the other adults commented that I should attend school





Manzanar represented childhood adventure and excitement to me, and the experiences there will live on in our family's shared memories. I have no doubt that Manzanar represents a great tragedy for many *Nisei*, but it was an event

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*Manzanar War Relocation Center, 1942*

in Manzanar with the *Nisei*, since what was happening there was “so historic.”

I took part in many activities in camp, along with both *Nisei* and Caucasian kids. Summer evenings were spent watching free movies, or playing “kick the can,” under the watchful eye of armed guards in the towers.

We socialized with everyone we knew, from *Nisei* residents to the camp director, Ralph Merritt, without regard to racial background. In

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fact, I remember being impressed with the peaceful and productive way that everyone “got along.”

I remember my father saying a noted photographer was visiting the camp, and asked if I wanted to meet him. I declined, but have since regretted missing the chance to meet Ansel Adams, who was there preparing his famous photo essay.

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Other memories include enjoying the flower and vegetable gardens, tended by both Caucasian and *Nisei* residents that dotted the camp; eating the wonderful food in the mess hall; and exploring every inch of this fascinating place.

Our family traveled up the steep, switch-backing road to Whitney Portal for mountain picnics, and posed for pictures on a giant glacial boulder with carved steps.

As the war progressed, the feeling of panic subsided and the reasons for the camp’s existence began to evaporate. My father found a new job, and we soon moved away from Manzanar to what was, for me, just another “new adventure.”

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For many years thereafter, I had heard that nothing remained of the camp. In 1988, my husband and I went there with my son and his family. As I approached that same rock-walled entrance station, with the nearby mountains towering in the afternoon sunlight, I was overcome with emotion.

