



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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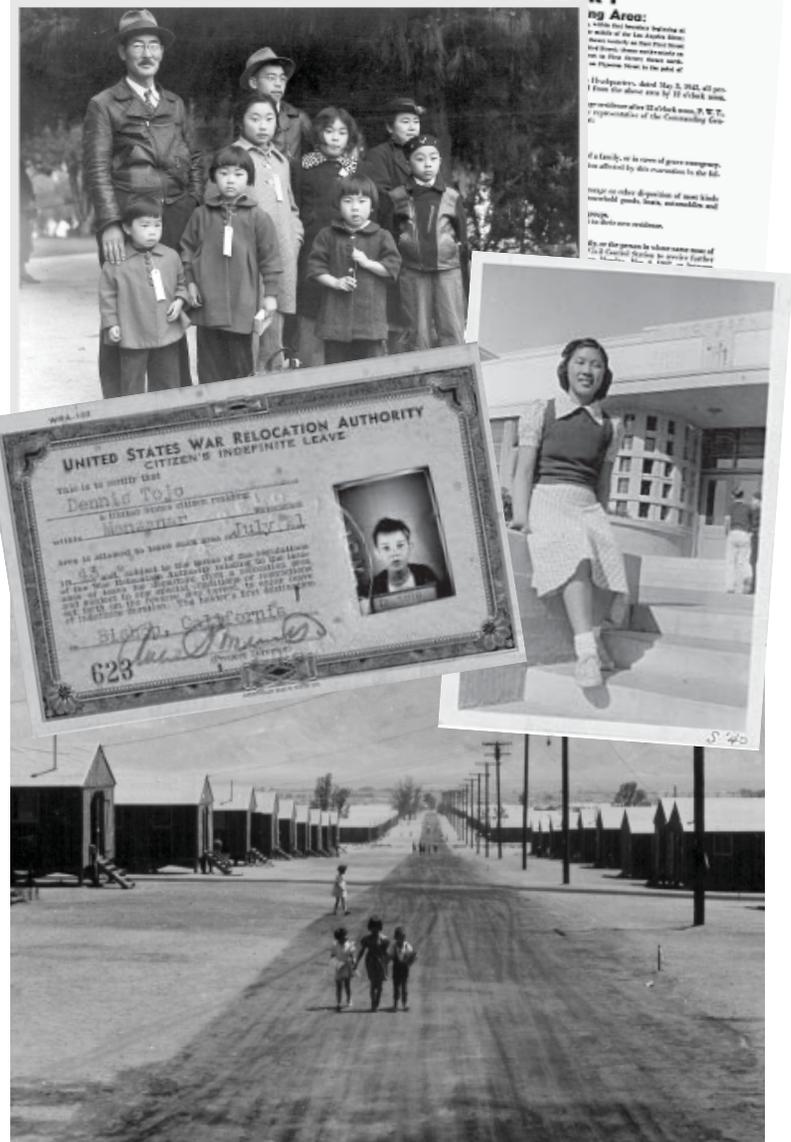
# Manzanar



## 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

**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.



## TULE LAKE

**Location:** Modoc County, California, near the Oregon border.

**Environmental Conditions:**

Located on flat and treeless terrain with sandy soil.

Winters are long and cold and summers hot and dry.

**Acreage:** 7,400

**Opened:** May 25, 1942

**Closed:** March 20, 1946

**Max. Population:** 18,789 (December 25, 1944)

**Demographics:** Originally, more than 3,000 people were sent directly to Tule Lake from California assembly centers. Once Tule Lake became a segregation center, the population came from all five western states and Hawaii.



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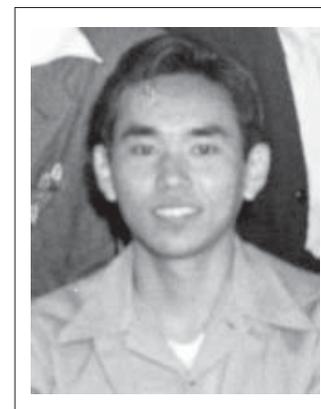
## HIKOJI “Jack” TAKEUCHI

**Family # 9096**

**Camps: Manzanar, CA  
Tule Lake, CA**

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*Hikoji Takeuchi, 1943*

I was born on December 18, 1921 in Little Tokyo in Los Angeles. My parents were from Hiroshima, Japan. I had an older brother and sister who lived in Japan, but I never met them. I also had a kid sister who was six years younger than me, who was born in America. My parents had their own sushi restaurant in Little Tokyo. My dad always used to say, “Nothing like America!”

I went to Amelia Street School where many of the students were Japanese. There were also Mexicans and Russians, but we never looked at each other as Japanese or Mexican or Russian. We were just kids having a great time.

Our teacher, Mrs. McDougal, used to say, “America is strong because no matter where people come from, they share the same dream.” Our faces and the colors were different, but we were Americans. I also went to Japanese language school. Our Japanese teachers told us, “You are indebted to that country you are born in. No matter what happens, you are a citizen of that country.” I graduated from Lincoln High School in June, 1941 and dreamed of going to college, but my father died in 1939 and we couldn’t afford it.

On December 7, 1941, I was washing dishes at our restaurant. Smitty, one of our customers, came running in and shouted, "We've been attacked! Japan just bombed Pearl Harbor!" I thought he was kidding. I didn't believe it until I turned on the radio. My mom couldn't believe

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**"We've been attacked!  
Japan just bombed  
Pearl Harbor!"**

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it either. Since my father's death, she was the one who held our family together. She was worried sick.

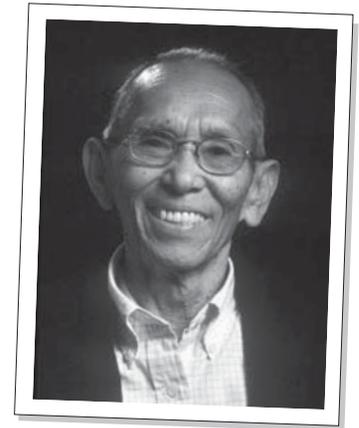
After Pearl Harbor, people treated us differently. Whenever I went out of our neighborhood I knew that eyes were upon us—and they were not loving eyes. They were very hostile. One day a man on a streetcar demanded my seat. He said, "Why should a Jap sit down while I have to stand?" So, I stood up and got off the street car. Another time, a guy tried to knock me down on the street.

Before the war, I had saved all of my dimes and nickels to buy a short-wave radio. My dad put an antenna on the roof. After Pearl Harbor, the FBI came and took my radio. After years of saving my money for it, they just walked in and hauled it off. They took my Kodak camera, too. I was mad.

We had just remodeled our restaurant, but when the Executive Order came, we had to padlock the restaurant and get out. We lost everything. Our Buddhist church group went around trying to help people store their things, but there was very little time. My kid sister had a cat named Fuji—after Mount Fuji—but we couldn't take him with us. We don't know what happened to him.

and I went to Japan after the war. My older brother and sister in Japan had already died of disease.

In Japan, I served as an interpreter for the U.S. forces. I came back to the U.S. in 1956 and eventually got a job in the costume department of a movie studio. That's where I worked all my life. My wife Ritsuko is from Japan. Marrying her was the wisest thing I ever did in my life. We have four kids. They are all Americans.



*Hikoji Takeuchi, Nov. 2002*

When we were sent to camp, everything that I believed in was dashed to the ground. It took me so long to come out of my shell. It hurts to be doubted. But, in 1988 the U.S. government apologized to Japanese Americans; it took a lot of guts. There is no other place that can compare to America.

After all these days, weeks, months, years gone under the bridge, I would say to young people: Learn how to get involved and to get involved you have to get an education. Look at what's happening. There's a right way and a wrong way of doing things and even if you at that time think that it's right, it may not be right. Learn to look at both sides of the question. Don't be afraid.

When I was a kid and I read the Constitution, I never gave it a thought. But after what I have gone through, it holds meaning.

to a foreign country that I did not know? The U.S. Government did not trust us. I was born here, educated here, and raised here. America taught me to be a citizen and a human being. I did not know anything but America.

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**I was born here, educated here, and raised here. America taught me to be a citizen and a human being.**

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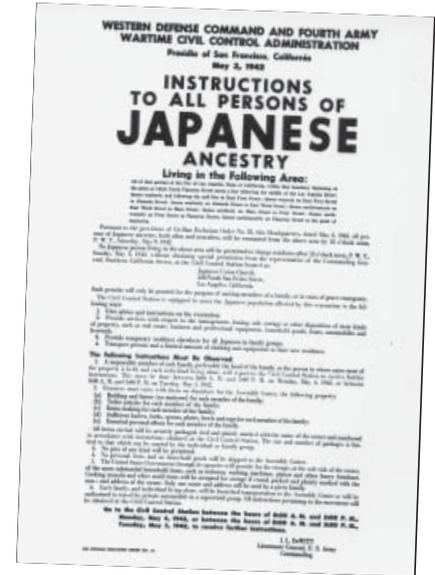
After the war broke out, my two cousins and I had gone to the Army recruiting office to volunteer to serve our country. The Army guys threw us out of the office because they didn't want any "Japs." Later, after the restrictions were lifted, both of my cousins enlisted and were killed. They are buried next to each other in the West LA cemetery, so they will always be together.

When the Loyalty Questionnaire came out I said "no/no" because my country did not trust me. With several thousand other people, we were sent to Tule Lake Segregation Center in Northern California. I was later sent to Bismarck, North Dakota. My mother, kid sister,



*Internees from Manzanar Arrive at Tule Lake*

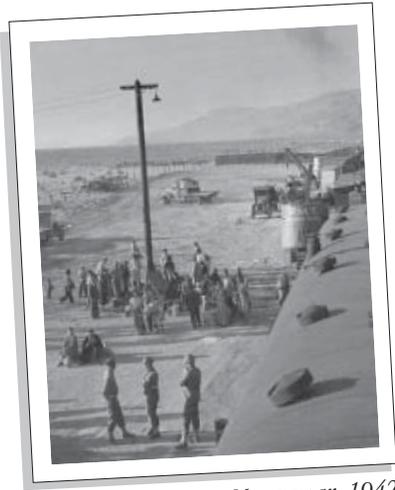
The Army posted evacuation notices in our neighborhood—even inside our restaurant—telling all people of Japanese ancestry to be ready to leave Los Angeles on May 9, 1942. We were told that we were being evacuated for our own protection. That morning, we had our suitcases out front by the street. A



priest who was there to help took us down to the train station and helped us with our bags. He gave my mother a cup of coffee. I appreciated what he did for us, but I never got to say "Thank you." I still think about that. A lot of things that I don't like happened, but some things made me open my eyes and my heart.

The trip to Manzanar was my first train ride. All the blinds were drawn down, and the train was packed. Every seat was taken. We were not allowed to raise the blinds or windows. It was very uncomfortable. There were two MPs—Military Police—in our car. They had bayonets on their rifles. The people were in shock. Most were silent. We took the train to Lone Pine, and then a bus took us to Manzanar.

I had never been out of Los Angeles before. I had never seen a desert. I didn't know what it was. That first night, I looked up at the sky through a knot hole in the roof of our



*Arriving at Manzanar, 1942*

barrack. I saw the stars and I thought, “My God, it’s so beautiful.” It was the first time I had seen stars like that. No one can take away the beauty of nature. The next morning, there was a sandstorm and sand entered through the cracks and knotholes in our barrack.

As days progressed, we got to know our neighbors. We all pitched in and helped each other. Each block had a restroom for women and a restroom for men. There were no stalls so you saw other people sitting next to you on the toilets. We used cardboard to make stalls for the women.

A week after we got to Manzanar, I went looking for scrap wood to make a chair for my mom. I wanted her to have a place to sit besides her cot. Some barracks were still being built, so there was a pile of wood. I started walking towards the pile and I came across an MP walking there. I asked, “Can I go over there and get some scrap wood?” He said, “Sure.” So I walked over and picked up a pile of lumber. I was holding it in my arms. Then the MP told me to come back. I started walking towards him and all of the sudden I saw him lowering his rifle and aiming at me. I thought, “What the hell is he doing?”

As soon as I heard the gun go off it felt like there were hot iron rods running through my body. I was wearing a leather jacket and a t-shirt. I must have fallen on impact.

When I picked myself up, I realized I was full of blood. I thought, “My God, I’ve been shot!” I started running towards camp. A couple was walking nearby and they stopped a passing truck and took me to the hospital. I was shot with buckshot and there were seven pellets in me.

It took me a long time to recover physically, but much, much longer emotionally. It still hurts to think about it. I never told my children, even though they have seen the scars. I never saw the MP again. As far as I know, he was never punished for shooting me, but he had to live with what he did.

While I was in the hospital, some guys from the construction department heard the story, and they made a chair and a table for my mom. No matter how bad things get, there are people who are nice.

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**No matter how bad things get, there are people who are nice.**

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Over time, some things changed at Manzanar. Japanese people love nature. They love gardens and trees. Manzanar was a barren desert, but eventually, we got seeds and planted lawns and gardens between the rows of barracks. Some blocks built small ponds. Farmers raised watermelon, cantaloupe, and other crops. The watermelon was so sweet that I can still taste it.

In 1943, the government issued a Loyalty Questionnaire that everyone had to answer. It asked if we would serve in the military and forswear any allegiance to the Japanese Emperor. How could I forswear allegiance