



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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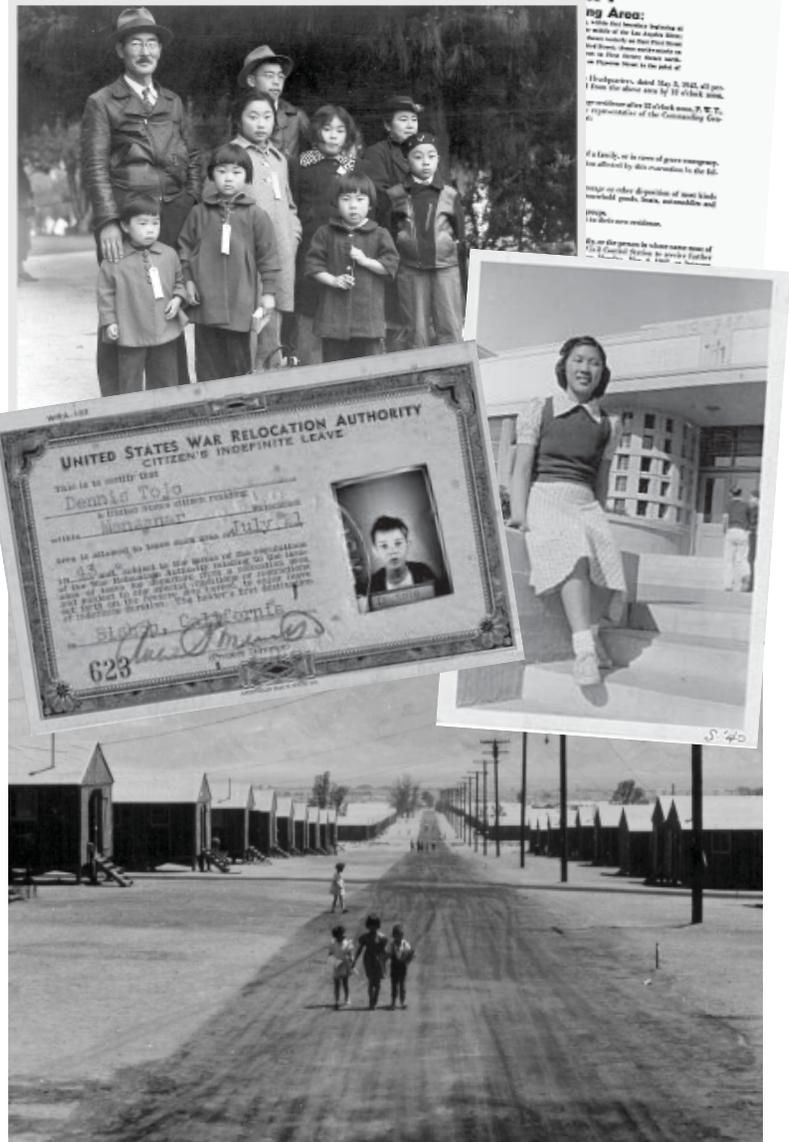
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Manzanar



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)

MINIDOKA

Location: Jerome County, Idaho

Environmental Conditions: elevation 4,000 ft – high desert. Temperatures ranged from the low 100s in summer to –30 in the winter. When the rains came in autumn the entire Relocation Center grounds turned to mud, often knee deep.

Acreage: External boundaries included 33,000 acres. Administration and residential areas included 950 acres in the west-central portion.

Opened: August 10, 1942

Closed: October 28, 1945

Max. Population: 9,397 (March 1, 1943)

Demographics: Internees primarily came from Seattle, WA, Portland, OR, and surrounding areas. In 1943, 1,900 internees from Tule Lake and 227 internees from Manzanar (originally from Bainbridge Island, WA) were transferred to Minidoka at their request. Additionally, approximately 200 Japanese Alaskans were interned at Minidoka.



MARIAGNES AYA UENISHI MEDRUD

Camp: Minidoka, ID

My father Joseph Kozo Uenishi, emigrated to the U.S. from Japan with his parents when he was a boy. In 1923, when he was 23 years old, he went back to Japan and married my mother, Kane Katsuragawa.

My father helped build the Great Northern Railroad across the northern tier states. I was born in Spokane, Washington, in 1925, and our family eventually settled in Seattle.

Shortly after Pearl Harbor was bombed, my father was picked up by the FBI and, with other community leaders, held in Army and Department of Justice camps for over a year without any charges filed.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, giving the army authority to move all people of Japanese ethnicity on the West Coast, citizens and aliens alike, into “assembly centers.”

We were allowed to take only what we could carry, selling our '41 green Chevrolet, furniture and other household goods for a pittance. What we could not sell or give away, we boxed and stored in the basement of the house.

My mother insisted we scrub and clean everything in the house before we left. An empty, spick-and-span house was a memorial to what was once our home.

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from a Department of Army camp in Kooskia, Idaho. He then traveled to join our family in Minidoka in December 1943. Our one room now contained five beds.

Eventually, a Catholic Church in Utica, New York, sponsored my father to work for an orphanage. We arrived there by train in December, 1944. The snow was so deep that we could not see the house across the street for some weeks. It was a strange and alien place for someone from Seattle.

The chaplain at the Utica Army General Hospital found out that there was a Japanese family living nearby. He asked my father if his two daughters might visit some of the Japanese American (*Nisei*) wounded at the hospital. Most of the *Nisei* were from Hawaii, and had been wounded in Italy and Germany. Utica was a stopping-off point on way to an army hospital closer to their homes.

My father gave permission. Nothing prepared me for what I would see. I visited young Japanese American soldiers who had lost limbs, were blind, completely

...a woman came up and yelled into my face, from only inches away, "You goddamned Jap. You don't have any right to be here. Get out of my sight, or I'll kill you!"

I was speechless; not frightened, but numb. There was so much I wanted to yell back at her.

bandaged in white. It was my first encounter with the physical damages of war, and it was devastating.

I don't know what was mumbled. What could I have said to be a comfort? I only remember stumbling after the chaplain until finally we were free and on our way home.

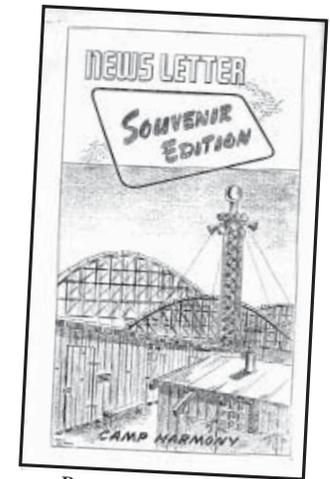
While waiting for a bus to go home, a woman came up and yelled into my face,

All Japanese on the West Coast lived fearing the unknown. It was a very difficult time for me, at 16, trying to pay attention to school, worrying about where my father was and trying to help my mother cope.

When the Army next moved us, in September, we went by train from King Street Station in Seattle to a place called Minidoka in south central Idaho. We rocked back and forth in our seats as the train rolled, military police moving back and forth, patrolling the cars. Window shades were pulled down so we could not see.

After two days and nights in confinement, we found ourselves by a railroad siding in a dusty, desolate, lonesome landscape without a name, on a hot dry day. We were transported by school buses to our new home, a room about 20x20 feet in a tarpaper-covered building. It contained four iron cots and mattresses of blue ticking, G.I. blankets, and pillows. It was to be home for my mother, sister, brother and me for more than two years.

A strong early memory of Minidoka was the communal bathrooms. They were not unlike those of the assembly center, but with a new element. You sat on a metal bench, which had holes. Periodically, water whooshed through below. I soon learned it was best to sit as far away as one could from the source of water being dumped. There were showers, no curtains; no bathtubs. And no privacy.



Program from Camp Harmony



High School Students Landscaping Between Classes

We stood in line for meals three times a day: White bread, Vienna sausages and canned sauerkraut. There was no rice, traditional in an Asian diet.

Clothes were washed by hand in communal laundry tubs with ridged surfaces to scrub, and dried however one was able.

Eventually we got used to much of the routine. As the oldest child, I had to help my mother as much as I could. Stand in line for lunch, forever white bread. Stand in line again for supper, more Vienna sausages. No school, no walking to the library and checking out books to read. I missed that the most.

We idled away our days, doing what I cannot remember. Sometime in October, school started. We sat on the floor or up against the walls in another tarpapered barrack building. There were no books, desks, chairs or blackboard. I remember one teacher who valiantly tried to teach government/civics. I often wonder what she thought about where she was and what she was trying to do.

By mid-1943, the Supreme Court ruled that the government could not keep Japanese Americans detained in a camp. The war was expensive; it did not make sense to keep able-bodied young people from working to help win the war, either in military service or the civilian workforce.

As a first step, all residents over the age of 17, citizens and non-citizens, were required to complete a questionnaire to separate the loyal from the disloyal. Two of the questions asked willingness to serve in the military and to deny allegiance to Japan. “Yes” answers could clear us to go outside camp on “indefinite leave.”

My father, in a Department of Justice camp in Livingston, Louisiana at the time, had despaired of ever being reunited with his family. Also, his parents had returned to Japan years before, and his father had recently died, leaving his mother alone. He decided to request repatriation to Japan, with our family. If he signed “no” to the questions, our family would be held for use in a prisoner exchange.

I was 17, and determined to leave camp and remain in America. My signing “yes/yes” meant that the family would be separated. But I was an American. This was my country, in spite of what it had done to me, and I refused to change my answers. It was a test of courage for me. I had never defied my father before. Relatives and friends put incredible pressure on me to change my mind.

**I was an American.
This was my country,
in spite of what it had
done to me...**

Eventually, my father believed it was best not to try to force me to change my position. He also signed “yes/yes,” and was released