



*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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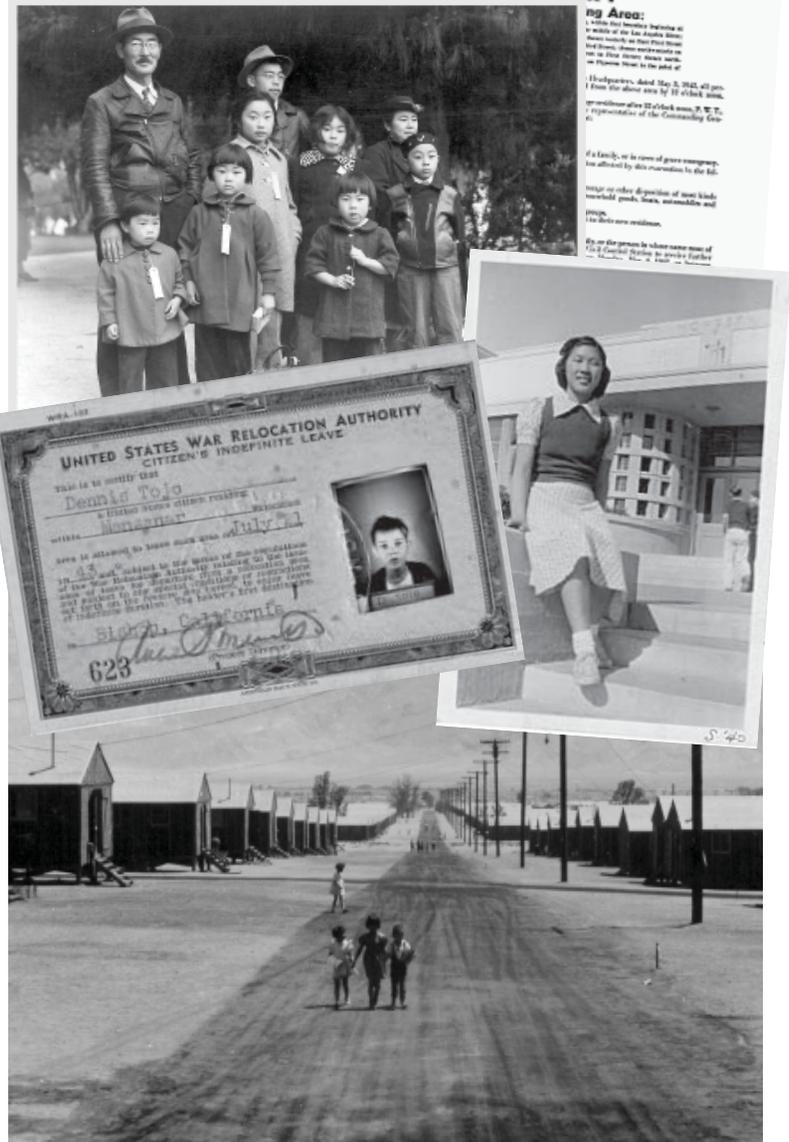
# Manzanar



## ID Card

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

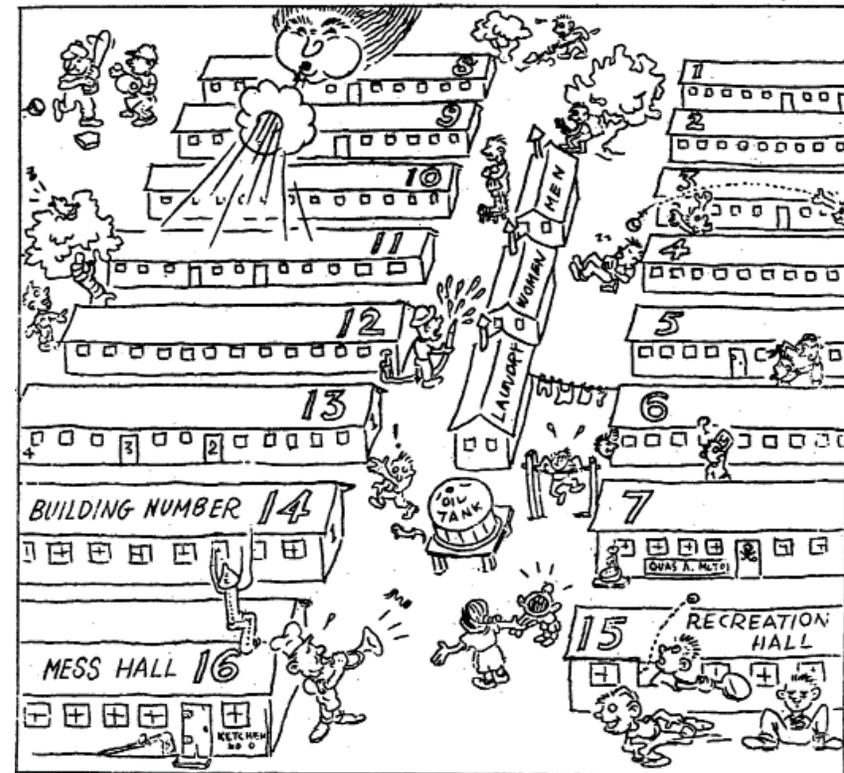
### INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY





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 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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## KAZUYUKI YAMAMOTO

**Family # 2970**

**Camp: Manzanar, CA**

**Address: 17-13-1**

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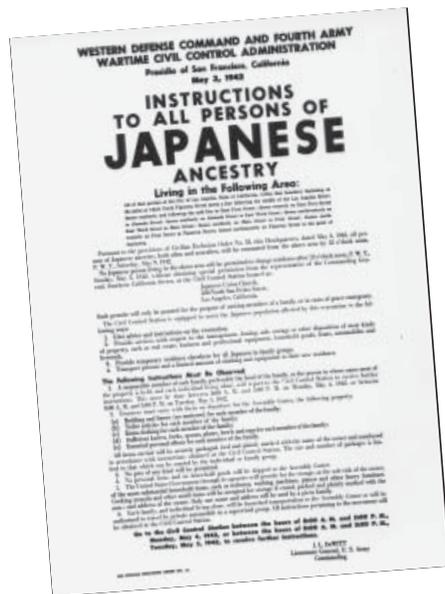
My family consisted of my parents Mr. & Mrs. Denjiro Yamamoto and the four children, the eldest being my sister Yeko age twenty, myself, Kazuyuki, the oldest son age eighteen, my brother Kenichi age fifteen, and my younger sister Yeko age twelve. As to the reaction I felt following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, what can be expected of a 17 year old not quite an adult in his junior year of High School but bewilderment and awe of what can be expected, certainly not separation from his school friends and neighbors to a War Relocation Camp (AKA Concentration Camp). At that very moment (December 7, 1941) I was working part time for my friend's parents' produce market without a care in the world but for my daily existence.

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**December 7, 1941... I was working part time for my friend's parents' produce market without a care in the world but for my daily existence.**

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We were told to only carry what possessions we could carry in our hands and nothing else. Not much



when you think about it now or in 1942. Today, perhaps because of the traumatic experience we were forced into, I cannot recall exactly how we were able to arrive, suitcase in hand to the departure point of our buses that took us to Manzanar. I don't recall how many hours it took us to reach our camp but

within eyesight of Manzanar, I could see billowing clouds of dust and realized my first glance of our future home. I don't remember much of that chaotic



was even more hindered of any raises in the future when the plant office informed us that the government had frozen any wage increases for the duration after we had worked for one month. With such low wages earned, five of us pooled our resources and rented an apartment in the poorest part of the city. But, as true as the popular Sinatra song, "Chicago", it was my kind of town for its friendliness and soon welcomed many Japanese families to its doorsteps. My older sister soon relocated to Chicago with four girl roommates and found work as a secretary which would have been unheard of back in Santa Monica, CA before the evacuation. After my six month sojourn in Chicago and my return to Manzanar, my home (ironic that I should consider a concentration camp my home) I spent the time in menial work as a clerk at the Relocation Office but vowed to return to Chicago which I did in 1945. The rest of my family joined me later that year and I was to spend another nine years of my life there. If it weren't for the frigid climate I could have spent the rest of my life around Chicago.

In reflection, war is a terrible thing. True, it has brought my family and me and many like us much sorrow and grief, but it also has given us a chance to see and experience so much more of the world around us. I hope it has given to a better understanding of different people and appreciation of the world we live in.

Two trips outside of Manzanar gave me some insight as to what to expect once I decided to make that permanent move. Prior to 1945 (Camp Closure) any Internee was allowed to relocate east of the states of Washington, Oregon and California. Once in 1943 when I was just out of high school, the camp was recruiting men to harvest potatoes and sugar beets in the state of Idaho. For the lack of farm workers during the ongoing war in Europe and in Japan, help was needed and there were plenty of young men willing to volunteer for this crucial need. Besides, it was a chance to gain some money for clothes I needed badly. I also experienced racial prejudice even in this part of the country where there were few Japanese, if any. My personal encounter was an incident in the small town of Bailey, Idaho where the local sheriff accused me and my friend of stealing butter knives at the restaurant where we dined. Also at one of the barber shops in town was a sign posted "No Japs allowed". But these were isolated cases; the farmers on the whole were very appreciative of the help we contributed. My second taste of the outside world was in the big metropolitan city of Chicago, IL where I eventually would relocate. Again, we were recruited to a work furlough of six months at a defense manufacturing plant making kitchen wares for the army. A low starting salary

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first day but I do remember that awful typhoid shot I took in my arm as a preventative. And we each had to fill what was to be our mattress with straw. Knowing that our life long Japanese friends were in the same terrible place, sharing the same type of living quarters, sharing the same dining facility and bathing facility left no one feeling superior but humbled each one into sharing their anguish. No one could predict what the future held. It didn't take long before normalcy took place in life in this god forsaken place. Our one room quarter which my family had to share with another young couple was finally relieved so that we took sole possession of the one room. That one room was later divided in two by stringing a wire across the room and hanging a curtain to make a bedroom and a front room. This became a common practice of all the Internees. Not much, but it gave some semblance of privacy. Family meals soon became a forgotten practice for children ate with their playmates or tried different dining halls. Each block consisted of thirteen barracks and a dining barrack or hall. Each barrack had four rooms, one room for each family.

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In the center of the block was a restroom/shower building and a laundry room building. Our family address was Block 17, Building 13, Room 1. In time school facilities were made so that I and the rest of my siblings could continue with our education and consequently I was able to finish my senior year at Manzanar High School. My father became a cook at our block's dining hall and my mother became a kitchen helper at another block's dining hall. My older sister who was already graduated from high school was a secretary at one of the administration



*Highschool Graduation at Manzanar*

offices. After graduating from high school I mired myself into several different jobs that I could find more to relieve my boredom than anything else. My first job was to make camouflage nettings for

the army and my second job was as a ditch digger which lasted about one day and I don't remember doing anything. One of the last jobs I undertook was as a junior cook that I enjoyed and as a clerk at the Relocation Office taking accounts of different job offers from cities mostly in the East as from Chicago, Ill., New York City, NY, Cleveland, Ohio, etc. One of the most memorable incidents that occurred while at camp was the devastating riot that killed several internees at the scene. It would be better to forget the reasons for the riot for it certainly was a regrettable event for the Army as well as for those that were killed.

A few words cannot reveal my personal experiences during my stay at Manzanar but in spite of this terrible waste of human lives and the terrible injustice of civil rights, I, as a Japanese-American,

**I, as a Japanese-American, can... be proud of the way my fellow Internees... conducted themselves with dignity and pride and made the best of the situation they could not control.**

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can say and be proud of the way my fellow Internees at not only at Manzanar but all the Concentration Camps conducted themselves with dignity and pride and made the best of the situation they could not control. Pride being the biggest factor that carried us through our tears and feelings our parents instilled in us from the start of our lives.