



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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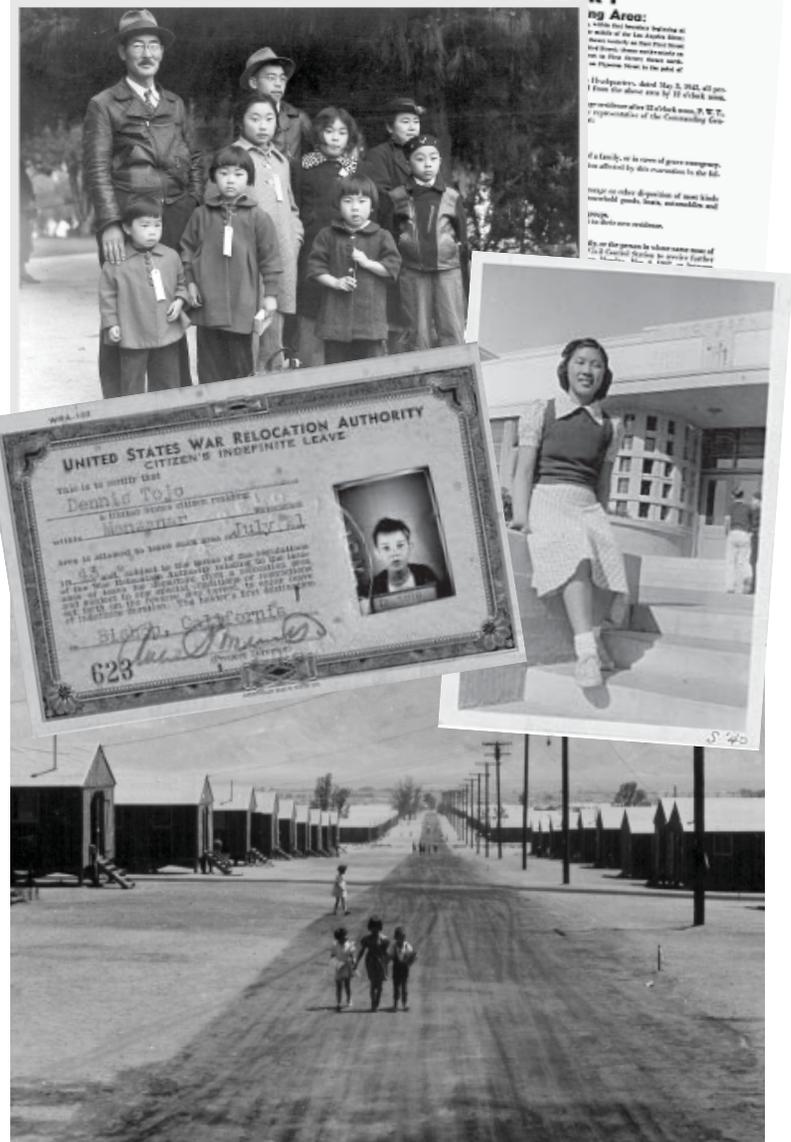
Manzanar



ID Card

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

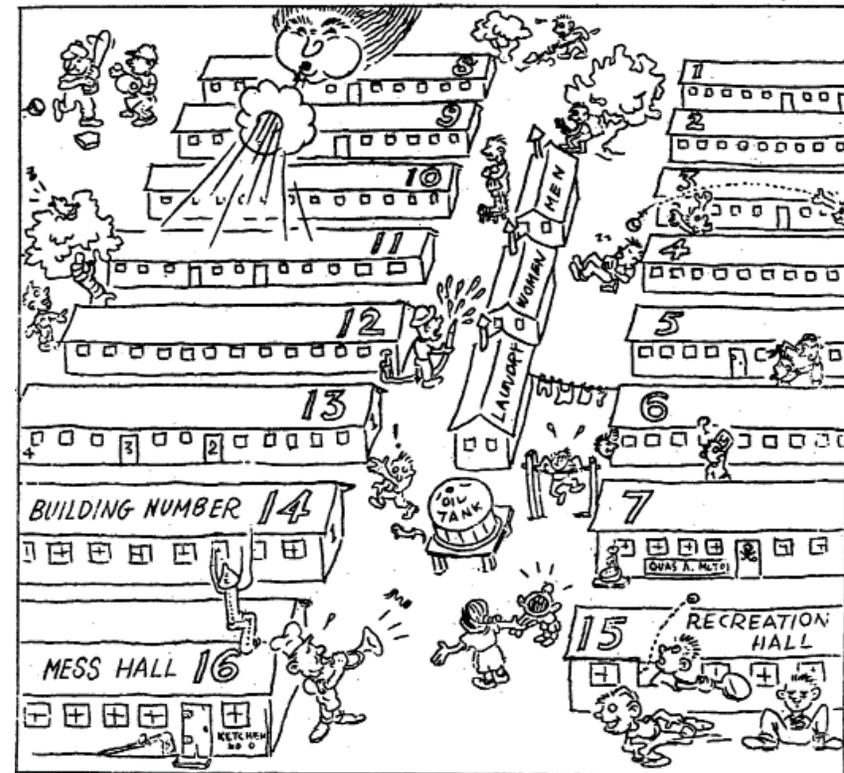
INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY





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.



CLAIRE NAKASHIMA

Family # 18359

Camp: Manzanar, CA

Address: 29-9-3

My father Sumajiro Harada came to the United States from Japan in 1905. My mother Kimino Komatsu arrived here in 1919. Their marriage was arranged.

My father was in business for 20 years, running the Los Angeles Farmers Supply Store in Little Tokyo, while my mother worked as a housewife. I had a younger brother named Henry. Our family lived in Boyle Heights, a mixed community of Japanese, Mexicans and Caucasians.

I attended Maryknoll Catholic Grammar School, where the entire student body was Japanese American. While in the Catholic Girls High School, I worked on the school newspaper and was a member of the Senior X Control. After graduating, I enrolled at the Metropolitan School of Business, majoring in accounting.

I was down in Little Tokyo at a Girl's Club meeting, when we heard the news that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. We were all in disbelief. After the bombing, my life changed drastically.

The FBI, with no forewarning, took my father away. Two agents looked through our books, while I accompanied a third one into our storage basement. My father was very active in

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the Maryknoll Kendo (Japanese fencing) Association, and I believe that is the reason why he was arrested. After being detained in the former CCC camp in Tujunga Canyon, near Los Angeles, my father was eventually incarcerated at the Santa Fe Internment Camp in New Mexico.

Seeing my father in the detention camp at Tujunga, with the barbed wire fence separating us, is something I will never forget. It was a very emotional scene, all the inmates lined up along the fence on one side and their family members on the other.

Seeing my father in the detention camp, with the barbed wire fence separating us, is something I will never forget.

We had about six weeks to sell, store, or dispose of our belongings. Most of the furniture was given away, except for my piano. It was sold back to the Barker Brothers Furniture Company, at a loss. I think the piano was the one item my mother regretted losing, although she knew there was no way we could pack it for storage.

Since my father was in the internment camp, an old family friend, Mr. Kobayashi, and his friend, Mr. Sumi, helped pack some of our possessions that a neighbor offered to store in his basement. Another neighbor agreed to take our dog, which was the most difficult thing to leave behind. We learned later that it was hit by a car. After camp we were able to retrieve most of the things we left in storage, although some items were water-damaged.

My brother went into the Army, joining the Military Intelligence Service. By the time he went overseas, the war had ended, and he served with the occupation forces in Japan. My parents stayed in Manzanar until it closed, then resettled at the Truman-Boyd Housing Project in Long Beach, where many internee families went.

Because of my experience as a medical stenographer at the Manzanar Hospital, I became interested in that field. However, I did not pursue it, instead working as a secretary in the State Disability Office in Long Beach and Los Angeles.

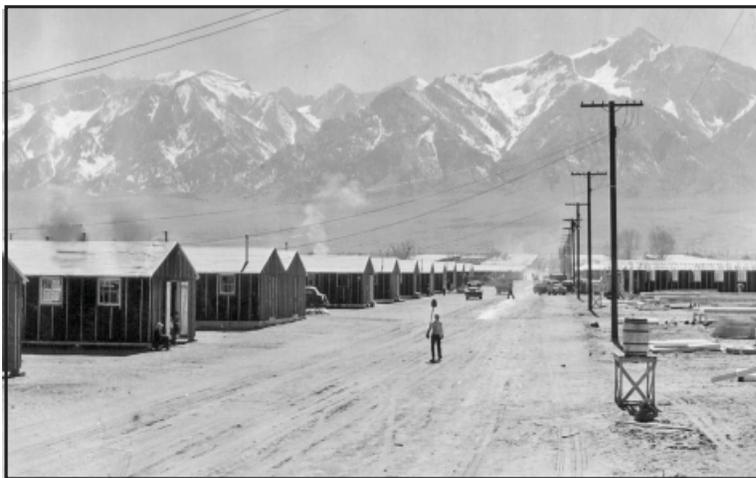
Shi Nomura, a former internee and curator for the Eastern California Museum, visited us, and we donated the tags with our family number, along with our mess hall tickets, a government issue P-coat and other items from Manzanar. In the 1980s, I wrote letters in support of redress, the Japanese American community's effort to right the wrongs done to us by our government during the war. I also attended the hearings conducted by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment.

As a result of my experience in Manzanar and the evacuation leading up to internment, I know that I have the strength to overcome any obstacle in life and survive. Because of our years together at Manzanar, I remain very close with my friends from the hospital and the stenographers group, and we continue to meet on a regular basis.

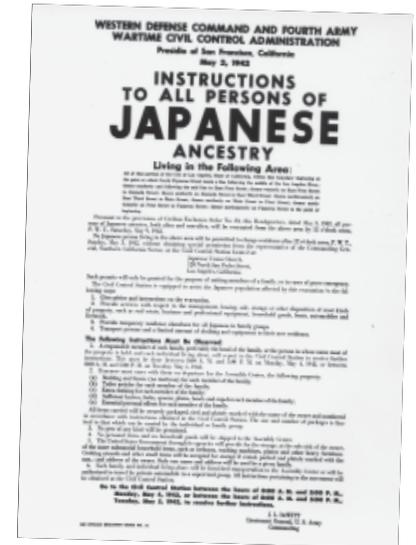
how to crochet, knit, and play poker and bridge during my leisure hours. One thing that lifted my spirits was the camaraderie in camp. We were all experiencing the difficult camp life together. The compassion and concern shown for each other were most memorable.

I left Manzanar after two years for Minneapolis, Minnesota, where my friend Terry Kobayashi had settled earlier. When I first arrived, I stayed in a large home that a couple had converted into a hostel for ten single Japanese American women, two in each room. We ate in a common kitchen. Father Lavery found a position for me at St. Mary's Hospital, as secretary in the Nursing School office. The hardest part of life in my new home was getting acclimated to the cold winters, sometimes as cold as 10 degrees, and the humid summers.

I didn't discuss camp life, except when meeting Japanese Americans from other internment camps, such as Rohwer, Minidoka, Gila and Heart Mountain.



We were instructed to take only what we could carry in our suitcases and duffel bags, which my mother made. I took my clothes and shoes.



My mother, younger brother and I were sent to Manzanar. We left on the Santa Fe Railroad train from Los Angeles, and transferred to a bus at Lone Pine, finally arriving at Manzanar after a full day's travel. We were escorted to the mess hall, and I remember having stew that night and sleeping on a mattress full of straw.

Since I arrived after dark, I couldn't tell what the camp looked like, except that when we were escorted to our "apartment" in Block 21, I noticed it was right across from the latrines. It certainly was a depressing sight. I was too miserable to cry. We shared the apartment with a family of five, who had arrived earlier and already put up sheets for privacy.

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The night we arrived, we were greeted by a dust storm. We had worried about the dust, and been told to take goggles with us.



Manzanar War Relocation Center, 1942

Later, we moved to Block 29, reserved for hospital employees and their families. My father was released from the Santa Fe camp, and joined us about a month later. I was told that Father Lavery, a Maryknoll priest, had spoken at my father's hearing in camp, and helped secure his early release.

I did not go to school in Manzanar, as I had already graduated in the summer of 1941. I met a few friends from home at the camp. However, I was very thankful we were able to go to Manzanar with our second cousins.

I got a job as a medical stenographer at the hospital, thanks to a friend, Rosemary Anzai, who'd gone to Manzanar as a volunteer to help set up medical services. We were assigned to take dictation from the doctors in the clinic, and also take surgical dictation. We had the choice of observing surgeries, but I never could bring myself to do that. Once I went in to take dictation during an autopsy, and the surgeon said, "I am now making a T-incision," and I was out of there.

Our first mess hall didn't serve very good food. Some

blocks had more clever chefs. I remember everybody going to Block 15 for better tasting food. Later they began issuing mess hall tickets, so we were forced to eat at our own block mess halls.

I remember the first Christmas in Manzanar. In one of the unoccupied wards at the hospital, there was a donated Christmas tree. We made paper ornaments and paper chains for decorations. We sang Christmas carols and I remember singing "O Little Town of Bethlehem," which brought tears to my eyes as I looked out into the dark, still night.

During my time in camp, I experienced many emotions, ranging from devastation and hopelessness to fear and uncertainty about the future.

I had many happy moments too, like being the maid of honor for my second cousin's wedding at the Catholic Church. I made many friends working at the hospital. We worked and ate together, and held "gab sessions" in the evenings. I went to dances at the mess hall, and learned

