



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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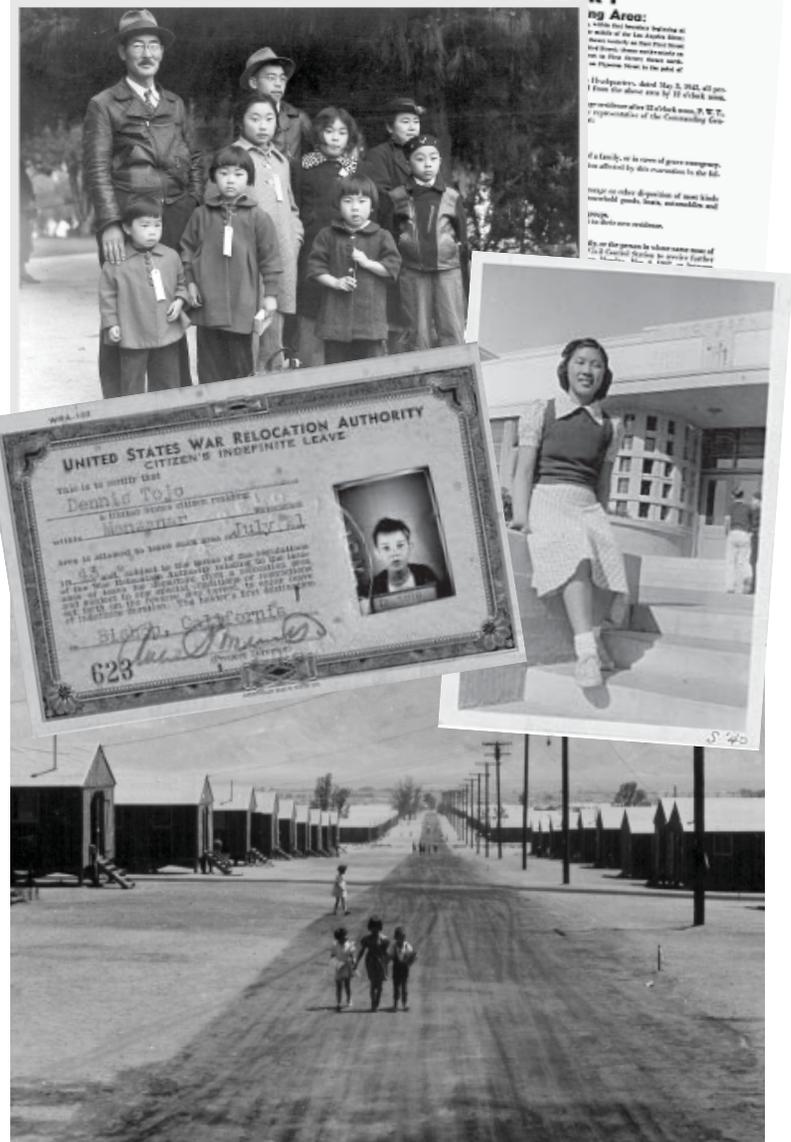
Manzanar



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)

GILA RIVER

Location: Southern Arizona

Environmental Conditions:

Located in the desert, temperatures reached 125 degrees, with summer temperatures consistently over 100 degrees. Dust storms were also a frequent problem.

Opened: July 10, 1942

Closed: Canal Camp: September 28, 1945

Butte Camp: November 10, 1945

Max. Population: 13,348 (November 1942)

Demographics: Internees primarily came from Fresno, Santa Barbara, San Joaquin, Solano, Contra Costa, Ventura and Los Angeles Counties via Turlock, Tulare, and Santa Anita Assembly Centers. 3,000 individuals came directly to Gila River.

Interesting/unusual facts

*The Gila River Indian Community objected to the selection and use of their land for a Relocation Center.

*The center was divided into two camps, Butte and Canal. The two camps were about 3.5 miles apart and included a total of 1,181 buildings.

*Gila River was so hot that the barracks had to have two roofs to protect people from the heat!

*Only one guard tower was erected at the Gila River Camp and it was torn down because of staffing limitations. Within six months, the perimeter barbed wire fence around each camp was removed.

*Japanese Americans at Canal Camp built model ships for the U.S. Navy to use in military training.



HY SHISHINO

Camp: Gila River, AZ



Hy Shishino

Fumio Shishino, my father, came to America from Kagoshima, Japan in 1910. He worked for many years in various jobs as a laborer, and picking fruit.

My father returned to Japan in 1919 to marry my mother, Toshi Kodama Shishino. He returned to America alone, and worked to save enough money to send for my mother a year later. They settled in Los Angeles, near Washington and Vermont Streets. Four children were born of this marriage: John in 1922, me in 1924, Masako in 1926 and Takao in 1928.

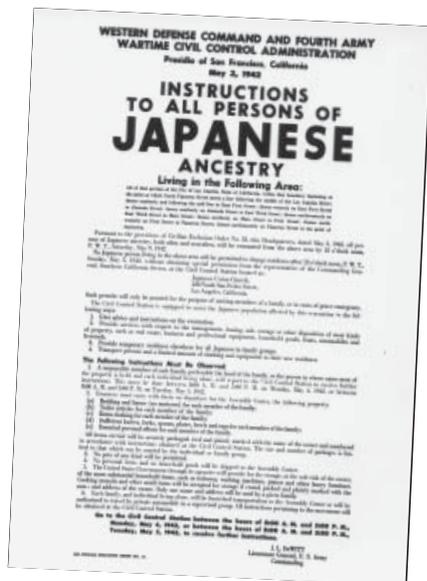
In 1921, my father became a florist, and worked in this field until we were forced to evacuate from the West Coast. I accompanied my father to the wholesale flower market at 5:30 a.m. on special holidays. I got up a half hour early every other day to go to school and change all the water in the large pots.

I was in my senior year of high school when Pearl Harbor was bombed. We did not experience any acts of discrimination in our neighborhood, as we had many friends and neighbors.

But as we were getting ready to pack up our belongings for evacuation, I was called into Principal Paul Webb's office, and he told me that he thought that I and fourteen of my classmates did not deserve our diplomas for the class of S'42 and he wasn't going to give them to us. As a result, the fifteen of us were not recognized as graduates of L.A.'s S'42 class for many years.

My father and mother lost everything, including the business and belongings. The business equipment was just left behind. Whatever we were able to sell, we sold for ten cents on the dollar.

We were evacuated April 26, 1942. Our family, along with 33,000 other people of Japanese ancestry, was put on buses, accompanied by MPs with rifles and bayonets, and taken to the Santa Anita racetrack grounds, which were used as an assembly center. Some people were herded into horse stalls. We were fortunate to be housed in a barrack (60' x 20') divided into five or six units, with



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just a cot and a straw mattress for each person. Being fenced off, and surrounded with guard towers and MPs with their machine guns pointed at us, was a very disturbing experience for all of us.

In June of 1942, I turned 18, and had to register in camp for the draft. A few weeks later, I received my military classification - 4C (enemy alien)! All of us in camp were treated this way.

My most disturbing memory of Santa Anita is of every Thursday evening, when the kitchens were preparing

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the end it brought to light the many injustices and denial of our constitutional rights during wartime.

Being called enemy aliens and put in concentration camps is an injustice that none of us will ever forget. We overcame the poverty and hardships

we all suffered, but we will all work to try and educate the people of America about what happened, and hope that this will never again happen to people of another nationality here in America.

Thanksgiving Day Parade, Gila River 1942



An adjutant denied my request. I was sent to Shepherd Field, Texas, for basic training in the Air Force. The paperwork went on a while before my request was approved. It took 75 days to receive my discharge, and then return home to Minneapolis. Shortly after I returned home, my father told me that he could die in peace, knowing that I had returned home to look after the family. He passed away a month later.

With no job, I sold my home and returned to Los Angeles with my mother and brother in July of 1946. With no chance to further my education, I worked as a cook in the restaurant business for 43 years, until I retired.

In 1988, two of my classmates urged me to write to the Board of Education and tell them of principal Webb's prejudice against those of us of Japanese ancestry. I wrote to Warren Furutani, the first person of Japanese ancestry elected to the Los Angeles Board of Education. Board President Jackie Goldberg was astounded after reading my letter. The board voted to investigate the matter, and discovered that my charges were true.

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The *L.A. Times* newspaper heard about this event, and devoted a half-page article to what had happened in 1942. Seven TV channels and two from Japan covered the event. It took many years for us to receive justice, but in

mutton stew for dinner. The whole camp smelled of the odor of soap. At midnight, the latrines were lined up with hundreds of people with diarrhea. The cesspools began overflowing, and the trucks had to come and suck out the tanks all night.

We were one of the last groups to leave Santa Anita, thus we experienced several departures of fellow internees. As groups of 500 left, on dirty, dusty old railroad cars, for the Gila River Camp, a recording of Guy Lombardo's *Auld Lang Syne* was played over a loudspeaker. The tears and anguish, as friends, relatives and families were split apart, still haunts me whenever that tune is played.

On Oct. 27, our family was forced to board an old, dusty train in the middle of the night, guarded with MPs, and arrived the next morning at a hot and dusty desert on Indian land, known as Gila Bend, Arizona. We were placed in the Gila River Relocation Camp, along with 13,300

other evacuees from various parts of California. We were housed in barracks, 120' x 20', divided into six units, and supplied with only a cot for each of us.

I volunteered to work on the camouflage net program for the Army. Since our eight-man teams were paid on a piecework incentive basis, we all worked very hard in 100-110 degree heat and dusty conditions. The one-year contract was completed in five months.

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At Gila, I played a little basketball. Sports were one way of killing time on the weekends.

When the loyalty questionnaire arrived, asking if we would forswear allegiance to the Japanese and be willing to serve in the U.S. armed forces, I answered yes-yes. I did not want to be separated from my family, as many of the ones who



answered no-no were sent to the Tule Lake maximum-security segregation center.

I was in Gila to June 8, 1943. If you applied for a job anywhere away from the Pacific Coast, you were given a one-way railroad ticket and \$25 spending money. With no work, several of my friends applied for a job in northern Minnesota at a summer resort. They urged me to come along.

I was only 18, and had never had a regular job before. My first paycheck was for \$20 a week. After taxes, it came to \$16.67. We worked all summer, from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., then took a break from 2-5 p.m., and worked from 5-9 p.m., seven days a week (90 hours), for wages and room and board!

The people in Minneapolis that I met were very friendly, and helped me to resettle my life.

After the summer job ended, my roommate and I went to Minneapolis, where I found a job the very first day as a cook's helper at the Radisson Hotel.



The people in Minneapolis that I met were very friendly, and helped me to resettle my life. I was able to bring my family there, and a few months later, to purchase a house, where our family was reunited after two and a half years of separation.

For my 21st birthday celebration, June 24, 1945, several of us went to Lake Calhoun, and went swimming. Not knowing about the conditions, my brother swam into deeper water a few yards away, and was met with freezing water. He went down with hundreds of people nearby, and no one noticed.

In January 1946, I was drafted into the Army. The same day, my father took ill and was admitted to a hospital, and I was told that his illness was terminal. On the advice of a chaplain, I applied for a dependency discharge, as I had a home to pay for, as well as my mother and younger brother to support, and my father in the hospital.

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