

# 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

**Residential Area:**

1. Within the Resident Area, persons of Japanese ancestry shall be permitted to visit their homes in the Resident Area only in their homes, their work places, places of business, or in the area of

2. All persons, dated May 3, 1942, all persons from the above area by 12 o'clock noon or earlier after 12 o'clock noon, P. M. T., representative of the Commanding General.

3. If a family, or in case of grave emergency, as defined by this regulation, the following

4. Any other disposition of these kinds, including goods, items, accounts and things.

5. In such case, conditions.

6. Do, or the person to whom same must of Civil Control Administration, War Relocation Authority, War Relocation Authority, War Relocation Authority.





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.

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## **ROBERT KATSUMASA OKAZAKI**

**Prisoner of War (POW) P#1444**

**POW Camp 33, Petawawa, Ontario, Canada**

**POW Camp 101, Angler, Ontario, Canada**

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My father Nobutaro Okazaki and my mother Natsu Koyama, both were born in Okayama Prefecture, Japan.

At 19, Nobutaro immigrated to Victoria, British Columbia. He worked as a houseboy so he could learn English and Canadian culture. Natsu joined him a few years later, and together they lived in Cumberland, on Vancouver Island, where Father was a contractor at a coal mine.

I was born in Cumberland in 1917. My brother Masatoshi was also born there in 1920. When the mine closed down, we moved to Surrey, on the mainland. There we bought some land to grow strawberries and vegetables. We couldn't make a living doing that, so I went to work at a logging camp in Port Alice, British Columbia. The work was hard, but the pay was good.

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Things were beginning to look up but this was before December 7, 1941.

When I heard that the mill was going to lay off all its Japanese workers, I headed back to Vancouver, and found things even worse there. After the attack on Pearl

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Harbor, the Canadian Military began rounding up any and all men of Japanese ancestry, and that left the wives and mothers and children without any means of support.

Some men, including myself, organized a small protest group, the Nisei Mass Evacuation Group. We tried to convince the government

to evacuate us in complete family groups, as they were doing in the U.S., but the British Columbia Security Commission refused to meet with us.

Finally we protested in front of the Vancouver Immigration Building, where 40 of our community leaders had been imprisoned. Soldiers with rifles and bayonets told us to move, but we held our ground. Through the rain, we sat, cold and hungry, until my brother pulled up in a taxi and offered us boxes of O-Nigiri (rice balls), which we gobbled up. I was so happy that my brother had decided to join us in our protest.

As darkness fell, the soldiers let us into the Immigration Building, where we became POWs in our own country.

After endless days with no communication from the Security Commission, our patience ran out, and we started a riot. We hammered the steel window bars until they crashed down on the street, and destroyed anything we could get our hands on. The soldiers fired their guns into our windows; then, a tear gas canister came in. We were denied food for three days, and we never got to meet with any government official.

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**...we became POWs in our own country.**

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A few days later, we boarded an old dusty coach with six guards in each car, and traveled for five days, until we reached P e t a w a a ,



Ontario, POW Camp # 33. After a physical, each of us was given a POW number, a pair of pants and a shirt. I became Prisoner of War P#1444. I relaxed, knowing this was our final destination, but was also frustrated since this was the end of our fight and we had not accomplished our goals. My first day as a POW, and in my own country at that! Why? I haven't committed any crime!

The camp, surrounded by ten-foot high barbed wire fence and guard towers, was divided into two sections; one for the 600 German and Italian POWs and one for the Japanese.

To tackle boredom, we found a ball, used discarded lumber as a bat and organized teams to play a modified version of baseball in our small recreational grounds. We were also granted permission to grow some vegetables between the barbed wire fences.

For the first time since the start of the evacuation, a member of the British Columbia Security Commission met with us. He tried to persuade us to leave for work at a sugar beet farm.

On the night of July 1, I was abruptly aroused from my sleep at 1:30 a.m. by what sounded like firecrackers being lit off. It turned out to be the tower guards firing shots into our sleeping quarters. We protested this violation of the Geneva Convention by refusing roll call.



Major-General Wootton came to talk to us. He informed us that military and civilian POWs must obey wartime regulations and rules just like the military had to respect POW rights. He gave us five minutes to return to roll call. Meanwhile, a fully armed squad of soldiers surrounded

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our compound. Would I end my life at 25, shot by fellow Canadians? Nearly out of time, one of our leaders met with Wootton and forced a truce to the standoff.

Every month each of us was issued four post cards, onto which we could write seven lines of correspondence in Japanese or English. We were also permitted to write a total of 24 lines over three letter-sized pages. Everything we wrote must pass very strict censorship rules. We could not complain about camp life, or comment about the war or politics. Once I was reprimanded by the Sergeant Major for something I had written in a letter.

Near the end of July we were transferred by train to a bigger, better facility at Angler, Ontario, POW Camp # 101. Although we had not committed any crimes, we were housed with German and Italian POWs. Life was strictly regimented. Summers were blistering hot, and winters were arctic cold. These extremes were tough to take, coming from a temperate area like Vancouver. The first winter temperatures plunged below minus sixty degrees, but we still had to work. Many of the men returned with frozen fingers, toes, noses and ears, icicles hanging from their noses and chins.

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The most despised job was unloading coal from the train, because we got covered in coal dust. Other men were released to work in logging camps, earning \$50 a month.



We organized baseball, kendo, (Japanese fencing) judo, a band, running club. Despite the inconveniences of living behind barbed wire, Christmas was a happy time. We received cash donations from a number of charitable groups, and were given permission to use it to buy 3,000 bottles of beer for New Years Eve. Gifts of cigarettes, tobacco, cookies, biscuits, candies, and soap arrived from



our families held in other detention camps.

In February 1946 the government issued a "Form of Consent To Repatriation" to all persons of Japanese ancestry 16 or older. We were being forced to decide whether to remain in Canada or go to Japan. Six months had passed since the war ended. Our government still had not told us where we are going.

Finally the day of our release arrived, April 29, 1946! We fought very hard against the abusive, inhumane government policies on evacuation and the separation of our families. The evacuation destroyed the entire Japanese society in Canada, and I don't believe it could ever be rebuilt to what it once was. We left Angler

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P.O.W. Camp #101 with too many bad memories, too many tragedies and too few good recollections.

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**Racism was rampant, and I could not get a job.**

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At the end of the war, I was given \$11 for almost five years of incarceration.

My brother Mas and I worked for a while at a steel foundry in London, Ontario, but eventually we made our way to Toronto. Racism was rampant, and I could not get a job.

I spent all of my time gambling in Chinatown. I ended up destitute, and for two years I slept in the basement of City Hall or on the street, but my upbringing never let me beg or steal. I roamed the streets for two years. Finally, one day I decided to look seriously for a job and straighten myself out.

Eventually, I got a job as a cook, where I had three decent meals a day. I worked hard, and was respected by my employer, but soon left to learn carpentry. It gave me tremendous delight, seeing before my eyes what I was able to build.

After my father passed away, I asked Jean, another Canadian Japanese, to marry me, although I did not have any money. I borrowed \$100 from Jean, and to this day she kids me that I was bought for \$100.

I will always carry those horrible years of Angler deep in my heart, and although the Canadian government turned its back on me, my family and our community, as I look at my two sons, I am proud to be a Canadian.

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# WORLD WAR II INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE CANADIANS

## Facts and Figures



Prior to World War II, 22,096 Japanese Canadians lived in British Columbia; 3/4 of them were naturalized or native born Canadians.

During the war, 21,460 Japanese Canadians were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to camps without trials or hearings.

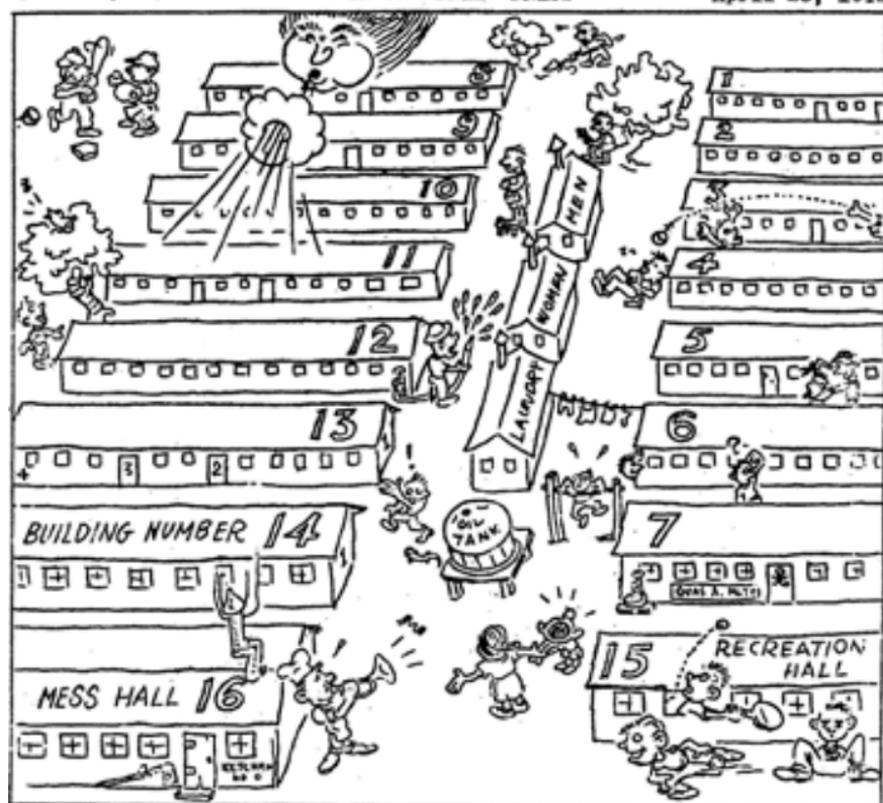
Ten internment camps, three road camps, two prisoner of war camps, and five self-supporting camps were scattered throughout Canada.

Unlike in the U.S., where families were generally kept together, Canada initially separated families.

The Canadian government seized and sold land and personal property of Japanese Canadians, and used the money to pay for their confinement.

After the war 3,964 (1/3 Canadian citizens) were deported to Japan.

Nearly 700 Japanese Canadians who resisted the Canadian government's evacuation orders, including ROBERT OKAZAKI, were sent to internment camps at Petawawa and Angler in Ontario.



## 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 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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