



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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Family # 2173-C

Camp: Manzanar, CA

Address: 31-10-4

On Sunday, December 7, 1941 the popular background music I had on the radio was interrupted by a special newscast: Japanese aircraft had attacked the U.S. Naval Fleet at Pearl Harbor, and Hawaii was in chaos. It was shocking news.

Within a short period after the attack, FBI agents jailed many Japanese language schoolteachers, commercial fishermen and company presidents. There was no proof of treachery or espionage on the part of these men. Their only guilt was being of Japanese descent.

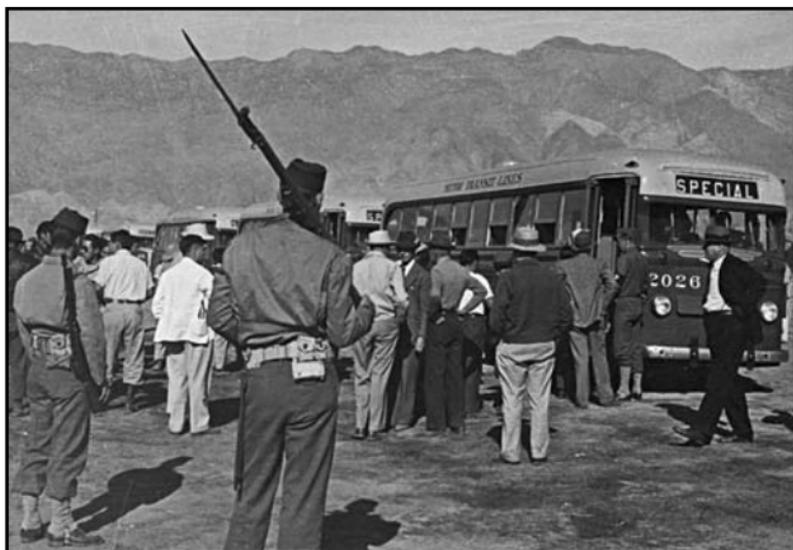
I was a student at UCLA at the time. How would my friends and people in general look upon us Japanese Americans? Phone calls came from friends who offered to help if we needed it.

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I found lively military activity Monday morning around the army anti-aircraft installations on the athletic field. Although classes were conducted normally, the Nisei students were unable to concentrate. Classes were skipped and time was spent either in the swimming pool or in conversations on the library steps.

that was for our protection! Our destination was Manzanar and no one knew where it was.

The drawn bus shades made it impossible to see where we were going. A soldier rode at the front of the bus. About three hours later, the buses stopped and we got off. One soldier handed us a brown paper bag, and another directed us to gather on the sand like a herd of



Arriving at Manzanar, 1942

cattle to eat a brown bag lunch. We were surrounded by sentries, and this was no picnic atmosphere. Reboarding the bus we traveled another three hours and turned off the highway, stopping at a gate. There were sentries walking along the barbed wire fence near the highway and searchlights atop the high towers at each corner. This was Manzanar.

The sight of the camp hit me hard. I was at a loss for words, and now felt that I was a prisoner with the family members and all.



Manzanar under construction, 1942

We had to stuff hay into a canvas bag for a mattress, and were crowded into a small barracks apartment with another family. We ached from multiple medical shots. Our sleep was disturbed by tower searchlights crisscrossing the camp. As time went on, we learned that scorpions sometimes camped out in our pants and shoes. What a revolting situation this turned out to be.

I wondered why we trusted the government that put us in this mess. Many people became distraught and suspicious. We were truly prisoners of war. Rumors pass easily in such a large concentration of people.

I realized I had to do something to keep my senses. My first job was at the camouflage net factory. When the factory operation ceased, I went to Idaho for three months to top sugar beets and pick potatoes. The farms were owned by Mormons, who treated us well. I returned to Manzanar on Thanksgiving, and became a librarian until I heard that the hospital was in dire need of help. I was trained and worked in the contagious disease wards.

A posted bulletin advised that the Army was seeking volunteers for the Military Intelligence Japanese Language School, and armed service to form a regimental combat team for European duty.

The decision here was simple for me. True, we had family ties to Japan but most of us had never been to Japan, and were U.S. citizens, having been born in America. My parents were Japanese citizens, but always taught me to be loyal and pledge allegiance to "my country." The U.S. government had questioned our loyalty. I had something to prove. I had to put my life on the line to prove to others the grave mistake of incarceration.

Together with about 100 other men, I volunteered for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and passed a stringent physical examination. FBI clearance changed my draft status from 4C to 1A (4C was for enemy aliens!). While awaiting travel orders, General DeWitt

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made a public remark that, "A Jap is a Jap, regardless of birth in America!" I immediately went to Ralph Merritt, the WRA Project Director of Manzanar, to complain and withdraw my enlistment. After talking to officials in Washington, he assured me that the War Department had relieved the general for the remark.

I saw action at Anzio to the Arno River, Italy. Then we moved into France, and were engaged in battles from Epinal through Bruyeres and the Vosages Forests. We

were diverted to rescue the men of the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, 36th Division, who were trapped by the Germans. This proved more devastating than taking Hill 140 in Italy. The 442nd suffered more than 800 casualties, and our combat strength dropped from three battalions to less than one.



442nd Regimental Combat Team, Training at Camp Shelby 1943

After replacements came from the U.S., we moved back to Italy, and rejoined the 5th Army. After an all night climb up Mt. Folgorito, we launched a surprise attack at dawn to open the spring of offensive, and in a short time broke through the German Gothic Line that had stalled the 5th Army all winter. The Italian Campaign ended shortly afterward.

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Now in sultan uniform, I transferred to the 5th Army Special Forces. The war with Japan was still in full force. I requested and was granted a transfer to the Pacific for the duration of the shooting war. I returned to the United States for thirty days before reporting to the 2nd Army in Kentucky. I was back in Manzanar visiting when I heard the Emperor of Japan surrender on the radio. This ended my service and my mission was accomplished.

Returning to civilian life, I began applying for work. Mr. Sharp, Chief Clerk for the County of Los Angeles Superior Court, offered me a deputy court clerk position. About eight months later I went back to school for electronic design and communications engineering. Completing this, I worked for the H-bomb operations in the South Pacific and then later as an aircraft-training supervisor for maintenance and flight personnel on jets.

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We had seen a change and contrast in life style from pre-war to that of post-war years. We no longer need a BA degree to work in the produce markets, or as gardeners and florists. Young people can now take full advantage

of their need to seek the vocation and profession they desire. They earned it with their own ability and we only cracked the door open. It's too bad that so many of our parents are unable to see this.

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.



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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