

# Manzanar



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

## ID Card



**ing Area:**  
 within that manner beginning at  
 1 mile of the Los Angeles River,  
 down-westerly on the First Street  
 (or Street) thence easterly to  
 or to First Street, thence southerly  
 to Fifth Street to the point of

Registration, dated May 3, 1942, all per-  
 sons from the above area by 12 o'clock noon,  
 or residence after 12 o'clock noon, P. M. T.,  
 representative of the Commanding Gen-

a family, or in case of grave emergency,  
 as indicated by this evacuation to the fol-  
 lowing or other disposition of most kinds  
 personal goods, tools, automobiles and  
 equip, to their new residence.

By, or the person to whom same must of  
 3rd Central Station to receive further  
 on Monday, May 4, 1942, or between





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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## **KAZUKO IWAHASI**

**Family # 13683**

**Camp: Topaz, UT**

**Address: 20-4-B**

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In 1913, my father Yoshio Oyamada, at age 15, came to America from Japan. He landed in Seattle, and became a farm worker, eventually migrating to the Imperial Valley in southern California.

My maternal grandparents came from Japan to Hawaii, where they did housework for a Caucasian family. They accompanied that family on a move to Pacific Heights, a wealthy suburb of San Francisco. My mother Shizue Inada was born there in 1909. After living in Berkeley, my mother moved back with her family to Japan in the mid-1920s.

A family friend of my father went back to Japan to look for a wife for him. The first woman they wanted for my father didn't want to come to America, so my mother became the next choice. An arranged marriage was performed June 30, 1927 in Oakland.

My parents settled in Berkeley. Father worked in a laundry, eventually becoming a nurseryman and gardener. I was the eldest of four children. I had two sisters, Akiko and Michie, and a brother Seiji. We lived in a rented house on property my father turned into a nursery. There were shrubs, big trees and potted plants all over the place. He gardened for a lot of wealthy people who lived in the Berkeley Hills.

I grew up with the same kids from kindergarten. Although my sister and I were the only Japanese



During the registration period after the order, families were given an identification number. I still have my father's original identification card, and remember our family number, 13683.

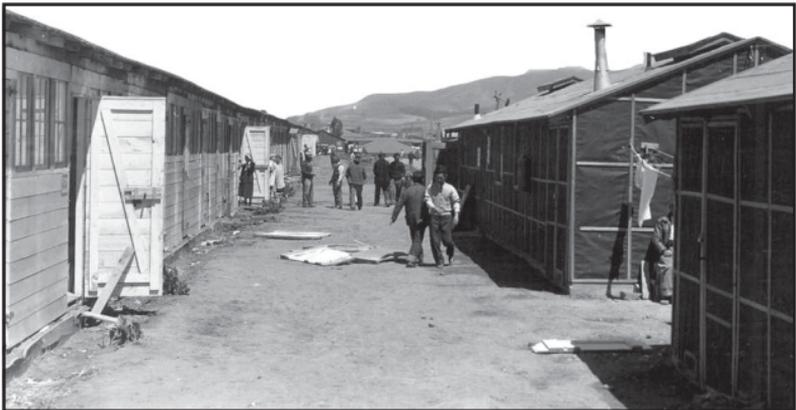
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We could take only what we could carry. My father sold or gave away most of his nursery stock. Whatever belongings my parents didn't sell or give away were stored at the Japanese Methodist Church, in Berkeley. Since we sold our car, a friend of my father, a Chinese man, gave us a ride to the Berkeley First Congregational Church, where we were to gather for evacuation.

For me, at 12, the evacuation process started with my first bus ride. Our Japanese community was taken May 1, 1942, to the San Bruno Tanforan Race Track, a designated Assembly Center, and our temporary home for four months.



*Horse stalls and barracks at Tanforan Assembly Center, 1942*

What a contrast this was! I grew up on the outskirts of Berkeley, where there were few Japanese Americans, and here I was in Tanforan with nothing but Japanese. Fortunately, we did not have to live in a

horse stall. We had a room at the end of a barracks, so there was only one family on the side instead of two. The walls were so thin you could hear everything going on in the barracks.

Being young and naïve at the time, I thought Tanforan was a big adventure. There were many recreation programs. We had a lot of fun playing ping pong and card games. Talent contests were held at the main grandstand. A group of girls in our block made hula skirts out of newspapers and danced in the show. School was pretty superficial without adequate supplies and books.

A train ride, also my first, took several days transporting us through cities, with shades drawn, and desert terrain to Topaz Relocation Center in the Utah desert. We arrived at Delta, the nearest town, and were

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**At Topaz, we were greeted by blocks of black, tar-papered barracks and white, powdery, swirling dust.**

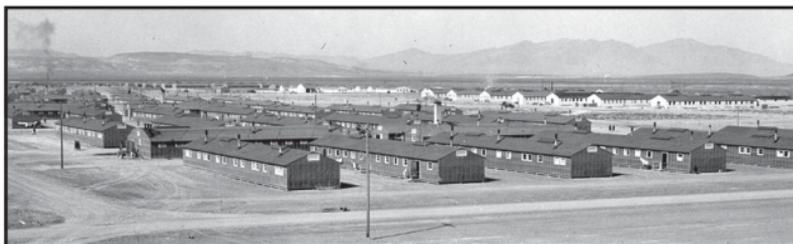
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herded onto busses. At Topaz, we were greeted by blocks of black, tar-papered barracks and white, powdery, swirling dust. Coming from the Bay area, we were not used to the dry, hot air.

As at Tanforan, there were community dining halls and bathrooms that had little privacy. Our family of six lived in one 20'X 25' room.

There were always building materials available, and the men would make tables, chairs and closets for our rooms. My father built bunk beds for my sister and I, and a chest of drawers for our clothes.

Father worked in the mess hall as a cook, and my mother worked as a waitress. Other women in her block provided childcare while she worked. Most people in



*Topaz War Relocation Center, Utah*

our block thought the food was pretty good. It was the first time I had ever had apple butter, which was spread on toast. Since coming out of camp I have never touched the stuff.

Topaz was our first experience being in snow. That was fun. The boys threw snowballs at the girls.

I attended Junior High School at Topaz, and made new friends from all over the Bay Area. It was a typical school environment, except that all the students were Japanese Americans. There were the class clowns, brainy, nerdy kids, and the goof-offs. I was just an average student.

School was much more organized then it had been at Tanforan. There were pre-schools, grammar, junior high and high school, which were together in the same block. The mess hall was converted into an auditorium. We pledged allegiance to the flag every day. They expected us to do this. Looking back, it seems pretty ironic to be saying the pledge of allegiance in a place like Topaz.

I loved to go to baseball and basketball games, and cheer on our Block 20 teams, which were some of the best in camp.

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There was a summer camp for us in the mountains at Antelope Springs. We would go out in Army trucks, and spend several days swimming, hiking and sleeping in pup tents.

I joined the Girl Reserves, which was like the Bluebirds or Scouts. We had block parties where the junior high school kids would get together and dance. In the fall of every year, there was a campwide celebration of *Obon*, the traditional Japanese harvest festival, and we got to perform the circle dances.

I remember a sad moment. At a school assembly, an announcement was read that Johnny, who lived in a neighboring barrack and volunteered for the Japanese American 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, had been killed in Europe while fighting for the U.S. A girl dashed out of the room crying. It was Johnny's girlfriend.

After the West Coast reopened for us, I returned, at 15, to my hometown of Berkeley. Father had returned a few months earlier to take up gardening. I stayed in a hostel set up in the same Japanese Methodist Church where we had stored our possessions.

Since we had no home, I worked as a schoolgirl, earning my room and board. During my high school and college days, I never lived at home again. The woman with whom I lived during high school, suggested that I become a nurse; I entered nursing school and received my BS degree. I worked in the nursing field for 38 years.

My mother and younger siblings came back late in 1945. Mom did domestic work. My parents took buses everywhere. A car was a



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luxury on their meager income. I heard no grumbling or complaining about their situation. Their

*Ganbatte* (hang in there) attitude sustained them through their lives.

When my children went to school and had to write reports of the camps, they would ask me questions. I went to the Congressional hearings on Wartime Relocation. People had some terrible experiences, which I wasn't aware of, being so young at Topaz. We only see things from our own framework. Teenagers told about getting immunization shots at camp, and having to strip, which was extremely embarrassing for them. The uprooting by the government and the resettling were difficult for many.

Even though camp holds a lot of positive memories, it was the bond of sharing a common experience that pulled everybody through this difficult time. It was the friendships that made it possible for everybody to survive camp.

Our generation took things as they came. We were so naïve. I think kids these days would rebel. You have to treat each other as you would want to be treated yourself. Treat people as individuals, and avoid stereotyping a whole group like the government did to us.

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# **TOPAZ**

**Location:** Millard County, 16 miles NW of Delta, UT.

**Environmental Conditions:** elevation 4600 ft, within the Sevier Desert – high desert brush with high winds and temperatures ranging from 106 degrees in summer to -30 degrees in winter.

**Acreage:** 19,800

**Opened:** September 11, 1942

**Closed:** October 31, 1945

**Max. Population:** 8,130 (March 17, 1943)

**Demographics:** Internees were primarily from the San Francisco Bay Area, predominantly from Tanforan Assembly Center.







*Manzanar Cemetery, Winter 2002.*

This booklet was developed by the park rangers at Manzanar National Historic Site in partnership with the the individuals profiled and their families.



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