THE MANZANAR PILGRIMAGE
THE MANZANAR PILGRIMAGE

A time for sharing

MANZANAR COMMITTEE
1981
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication Rev. Wakahiro .......................................................... 6
Dedication Rev. Mayeda ............................................................. 7
Introduction .................................................................................... 8
Tribute to Edison Uno ...................................................................... 11

## THE PILGRIMAGES

1969 ......................................................................................... 12
1971 ......................................................................................... 14
1972 ......................................................................................... 16
1973 ......................................................................................... 18
1974 ......................................................................................... 20
1975 ......................................................................................... 22
1976 ......................................................................................... 26
1977 ......................................................................................... 28
1978 ......................................................................................... 32
1979 ......................................................................................... 34

Manzanar by Lawson Inada ............................................................. 38
Manzanar by Lane Kiyomi Nishikawa .............................................. 39
Manzanar Committee Purpose and Goals ......................................... 40
Manzanar Committee Members ....................................................... 41

Thanks to the Community for their support over the last decade .... 42

## ERRATA

Table of Contents: "Manzanar Committee Purposes and Goals"
not part of book as printed.
Pg. 11: "December 27, 1979" should be "December 27, 1969".
Pg. 22: "1975" should appear in upper left corner.
Pg. 32: "1978" should appear in upper right corner; "with" should be "with".
Pg. 41: "Grace" should be "Grace Masuda"; add "Shoko Kiyono" and "Masa Shimada" to committee list.
This book is dedicated to:

REV. SHOICHI HENRY WAKAHIRO
1905 - 1977
REV. SENTOKU MAYEDA
1900 - 1978
In December, 1969, about 150 people, mostly young and mostly Japanese American, drove by car and bus to a place located between Lone Pine and Independence, California. At another time, they might have used Highway 395 to seek out the natural and planted trout found in the streams, rivers and lakes in Bishop and June Lake. Or they might come bearing brightly-colored skis, in search of the ski runs at Mammoth Mountain.

However, this group was in search of a site not located on the map, but one which would be identified by older members of the excursion who searched their memories and the landscape. Nine miles north of Lone Pine, they came upon an oasis in the midst of the high desert.

The place we had come looking for on this bleak December dawn was Manzanar, one of ten concentration camps in which the Japanese were confined during World War II and at that time, the most populated city in Owens Valley.

This was our first Manzanar Pilgrimage....

One day while driving south to visit some friends who were organizing Marines in Oceanside for an antiwar effort, Victor Shibata and I were talking. We had been involved in community projects that were to "serve the people", and were very much into organizing people to bring about social change and a better society for all.

It was the late sixties and we had been weaned and educated on the campuses in the San Francisco Bay area—not in the classroom, but on marches, demonstrations and picket lines that were almost formal extra-curricular activities. The demand for relevant education and open admissions for Third World students, the struggles for civil rights in the South, the riots in the urban centers and the effort to end the Vietnam War, were the issues during these times.

Victor's experience found him in the streets in the Los Angeles westside community, involved with the last generation of Japanese American gangs. Seeing young people fighting over someone else's "blue suede" shoes at a dance at "Old Dixie's", watching friends come staggering into the Holiday Bowl belligerent for having dropped "downers" or "reds", were the reasons Victor was involved. He, along with some ex-members of a gang called the "Ministers", organized the Yellow Brotherhood.

So Victor and I had graduated from different educational institutions and found ourselves at Denny's Coffee Shop on our way to Oceanside. We were rapping...thinking...

The United Farm Workers had just marched from Delano to Sacramento. Americans were marching on Washington—all with a cause and a vision of a better world, with no more oppression and no more war.

What could Japanese Americans organize around? What issue in our experience would touch the nerve endings? Yeah, we could march; we were sure of that, but where? To Gardena? Boyle Heights? To reclaim Terminal Island? We needed a "real" issue that would move many people.

And that's when we thought of the camps.

We had heard of them.
"Your folks? Yeah, mine, too."
"No, they don't talk about it; no one does."
"How come?"

We decided to march to the closest one and found that there was a place called Manzanar. We didn't know where it was, but we were sure we could march to it. So it was decided, but the name couldn't be the Manzanar March (sounds like something composed by John Philip Sousa). It would be a pilgrimage. It was to return or travel to a special place. Vic had found the perfect title—the Manzanar Pilgrimage.

We did some superficial research and found Manzanar on the map. Taking the scale of one-half inch to 100 miles, we plotted out the distance: it equaled 200 miles. As our fantasies succumbed to reality, so did the distance of our "march". Maybe, we could drive to the outskirts of the San Fernando Valley and march from there. Maybe, we could drive to Lone Pine and walk from there. Finally, Vic and I drove up to Manzanar to get a first-hand look. We spent the first hour racing around the old Manzanar Airport which was on the opposite side of Highway 395. We envisioned the runways as the roads that criss-crossed the camp area and the plots of land in between where the barracks had been. We ran into a hunter who told us that the camp was located on the other side. We found the guard houses and the old auditorium which now houses the Inyo County Department of Highways. We had heard of a cemetery area which was located around the back; we found a dirt road and drove until we saw it.
The Owens Valley is located between two mountain ranges. To the east is a barren and worn range called the Inyo which gradually rises from the valley floor. To the west stands the Sierra Nevada, the highest mountain range in California, including its tallest peak, Mt. Whitney. The east side of the Sierras is high and snow-covered, jutting up from the sloping valley. It was born out of some tremendous geological birthpains, and its shadow darkening the valley has been described as seven miles long.

And then we saw it! A stark white memorial stood out above the undergrowth of the desert. This was the cemetery.

I had the feeling of being somewhere significant—a true pilgrimage. Coming face to face with my own history, I found some old rusted car parts and broken dishes. The dump just east of the cemetery had a wealth of dated, broken army-issue potchards.

In the mile-square perimeter of the camp itself, among assorted trees, is an apple orchard. Although left for dead and forgotten, these trees still bear fruit. Just as the camp experience bears fruit for those individuals who want to pick and harvest the lessons and knowledge to be learned, these trees blossom every spring.

Even though we had been there once and had scrapped the march idea, we still lacked any deep knowledge of the camp experience. This was obvious when we planned the first pilgrimage for late December, 1969. The wind blowing off the Sierras screamed down the valley, armed with a million grains of sand. The weather was bitter cold and we got our first lesson in how life must have been in camp. The entire experience humbled us. The humility was reinforced when we found that a group of Issei, led by the Rev. Sentoku Mayeda, a Buddhist priest, and his friend, Rev. Shoichi Wakahiro, a Christian minister, had been returning to Manzanar every year since the camp closed. What we brashly declared as the “first” pilgrimage was the twenty-fifth one for the two ministers.

The pilgrimage attracted wide coverage by both the printed and electronic media across the country. Scenes of participants painting the monument, or huddled around a bonfire to keep warm against the whistling wind and cold, made a lasting impression on the Little Tokyos of America.

In 1972, the Manzanar Committee and the Japanese American Citizens League applied to the California State Department of Parks and Recreation to make Manzanar a State historical landmark. The designation brings with it one of those bronze plaques that you see on your summer vacations. The initial process went smoothly through the acceptance of the application and designation of Landmark #850. After successfully cutting down the statement to the required limit, things got difficult. It wasn’t the number of words that presented the problem, but several words in particular. These words became important, because if our negotiations were successful, the State of California and later the Federal government would acknowledge the great injustice done to the Japanese in America. The wording was crucial to the controversy. It was essential, as with our educational outreach, that the perspective from which the camp experience would be viewed would be that of the victims. The main objections to the term “concentration camp” were that the description was not historically accurate and it brought to mind the spectre of the concentration camps in Nazi Germany.

At a final meeting in the State Capitol, we pointed out to the State officials the contradictions in their position and their chauvinism in trying to define for us what terms would best describe our experience. They finally succumbed to our logic, perseverance and a little bit of Mau Mauing (a term used to describe “getting on someone’s case.”)

The plaque stands just off Highway 395, on the stone house that guards the entrance to the former camp site.

On your way up to “opening day” or “going for it” up on the slopes, stop and take a look. Thanks to Mr. Kado, the Issei stonemason who built the guard houses and the cemetery monument when he was in camp, the Manzanar plaque was firmly encased in stone and cement by his skillful hands three decades later. If you’re wondering about those strange marks, they were made with a hatchet and shotgun, not by the forging process. And, don’t ignore them. Whoever put them there didn’t realize it but he/she was making a statement.
This photo-essay is the collective effort of the Manzanar Committee and is a labor of love. It was inspired by the photographs of Mei Valenzuela, a student at East Los Angeles Community College. It represents a decade of involvement with a place, almost forgotten and covered over by the winds and sands of time.

But Manzanar is there; a place and a time for sharing the dreams and memories of the Japanese experience in America.

Warren Furutani
Sue Kunitomi Embrey
Of late, Japanese Americans have shown an increasing interest in the question of their ethnic identity and their American cultural heritage. Who they are, what they have been, and what they are destined to become are questions that are asked with more urgency and with greater frequency now than at any time in recent history. Nowhere is this interest higher than amongst the young Sansei (third generation Japanese Americans), who perhaps disillusioned with the fruits of affluence and material comfort, have turned from the abundant advantages that their Nisei parents struggled so manfully to provide them, to search for something that can only be described as spiritual in character . . .

If pressed to say just what it is that bothers the Sansei, they often give evasive answers or are vague. Seldom does the form and shape of their searching encounter concrete objects, or real expression, something that is, that has relevance to the fact that they are both Japanese and American. And when an event occurs that manages to touch on both of these aspects of our heritage, we are rewarded with a spectacle that is both moving and sublime. Such an event occurred on December 27, 1979. More than two hundred people were present to witness it. They had come over 250 miles and traveled five hours under uncomfortable conditions to get there. They had risen at dawn, boarded a yellow school bus in the cold, grey hours determined to make the long pilgrimage to Manzanar, a place which no longer exists except in the memories of men's minds.

Edison T. Uno
1929-1976
A lot of people ask what was Manzanar. We can talk about Manzanar as a matter of statistics; 36 blocks, one mess hall, one laundry barrack, two latrines, one basketball court. To some, Manzanar was just an interlude in their lives. It was summer nights on the grass between barracks, outdoor movies, picnics and bare streets. It was ice cream at the canteen and a high school dance at Manzanar High.

The only people that ever came out of that camp were people without souls, the “quiet Americans”—the people who did not dare to say anything or speak up; the people who were afraid to rock the boat.

When people ask me, “How many people are buried in this cemetery?” I say a whole generation is buried here. The Nisei Americans lie buried in the sands of Manzanar.

—Jim Matsuoka
Dec. 27, 1969
"... I think it is significant that as we stand in the presence of this monument, we dedicate ourselves to the causes of freedom so that no other people shall have to go through what we had to go through, some of your parents had to go through...

"... We commit ourselves that we shall always fight for the rights of all people to live as free men in this Nation ...

—Rev. Lloyd Wake
Dec. 27, 1969

SPECIAL NOTE: In 1970 people went with Rev. Mayeda’s group to Manzanar in the spring. The next formal pilgrimage was in 1971.
For the people who went to Manzanar, for example, and my parents who went to Pinedale and then to Tule Lake, they really had no option and I've always felt a deep sense of appreciation for the kind of suffering they confronted with the kind of dignity with which they did this.

—Gordon Hirabayashi
April, 1971
Manzanar is everywhere, wherever injustice rears its ugly head. It is the Indian reservation with close to 1½-million Native Americans still contained in them; it is the ghettos where thousands upon thousands of racial minorities are shunted; it is the prisons where thousands are confined because most of them are poor and of different color and race; it is the sweat shops and fields where countless numbers of people work under inhuman conditions; it is the strategic hamlets in Vietnam and in Ireland’s internment camps.

—Karl Yoneda, March 25, 1972
With or without a landmark, Manzanar represents the ultimate negation of American democracy—that racism which today polarizes our country and its people and even as I speak, wings its message of destruction across the skies of Vietnam.

We are not here to argue with those who believe that the Evacuation should be forgotten; that we are a “model minority” who has made the wall-to-wall middle class life style. Neither are we here to defend ourselves against those who hold our generation accountable for compliance with executive orders and military regulations which violated our civil rights, stripped us of human dignity and effectively destroyed half a century of contributions on the part of our immigrant parents and grandparents to America’s strength and wealth.

—Sue Kunitomi Embrey

From left to right: Sue Embrey, Los Angeles; Diane Kayano, Chicago; Yuri Kochiyama, New York; Pat Sumi, San Francisco.
We, the members of the Manzanar Committee, recognize that the struggle in Wounded Knee is today the focal point of the Native American Movement.

We also recognize that the historical oppression that took place at both Wounded Knee and Manzanar speaks to the necessity and the struggles there and also what is happening here today.

—From a letter of support to the Native Americans at Wounded Knee from the Manzanar Committee, 1973
RYOZO KADO, the stone mason, dips his trowel into the bucket, deftly flicks a blob of cement between two small rocks, and with another flick smooths the surface. Cameras click and whir all around him but he doesn’t seem to notice. He is 83, five feet tall, round, and grinning while he works, in his fedora. Like a sumie painter he makes each movement only once, and it is perfect.

He stands back and announces quietly, a little wearily, to the crowd watching, “That’s all, right now. I’m through for the time being.”

But a newsman rushes up, camera cocked, and urges rather mercilessly, “Work some more.”

Mr. Kado makes a joke of the effort required to bend for his trowel. Some watchers laugh with him. He begins to tinker with the stones again, while the cameraman squats up close to get the angle he’s been waiting for—rotund Mr. Kado profiled against the snow-laced Sierras, alone with the plaque he has just cemented into place.

James D. Houston
In "Stone Blossom Landmark"
Yardbird Reader, Vol. 2, 1973

April 14, 1973
It's a program of education to teach people not to sit back and apathetically accept things and to go through changes, but to stop, think, and question. And once you start doing that, you will no longer go through changes, you will start making changes.

The Manzanar Pilgrimage and those people who worked so hard to organize people to come out here recognize that this is a gathering of people and that those of you who have come here, have come for many reasons. It's true that the Committee controls an awful lot of what's happening here, but what we are trying to do and the reason we are involved in the Manzanar issue is not out of nostalgia but out of a concern for change.

The only way we have been successful with something as minimal as a historical plaque is because of the support of the people within the community.

—Warren Furutani, 1974
Esther Shimabukuro was one of twenty women and 980 men who comprised the original volunteers to Manzanar to prepare the camp site for the thousands of Southern California area Japanese who were evacuated from the Western Defense Command. These are excerpts from her speech, given April 27, 1975:

The majority of us were politically naive and socially unaware—all of us had one thing in common—we had at least 1/16th Japanese blood...

We manned the schools, hospitals, mess halls, organized churches and recreation—filled the work crews with the necessary man and woman power, ran all the facilities and services necessary to any viable community.

I feel strongly that we did what we had to do with our kind of courage, discipline and determination.

The younger generation is more aware and can articulate this social and political awareness. You have succeeded in making this a national monument. I hope it was not structured to perpetuate resentment and suppressed hostilities—but to remind the world community that incarceration is unjustified and inhumane—even with the realization that in the case of the Issei and Nisei, acculturation and acceptance in the working world was accelerated where it might have taken another generation or more to prove to ourselves and to others that we were and are capable of any task that is put before us.

You have chosen to keep people aware and awake to the injustices experienced by any group who find themselves in the minority and to prevent further incarcerations or any other inhumane act as one group pits themselves against another.

—Ester Shimabukuro
Shinya Ono translates in Japanese, Esther Shimabukuro speaks, and the Sierras bear witness to the events of the 1975 Pilgrimage.
A year after they closed down the camp and let us go home, I came back because it was my duty as a Buddhist minister to perform services for the dead that were left buried here. But when I came back, I found the place all locked up, and a soldier said, "Hey, you can't go in there. That's U.S. Government property!"

You know it was funny, just a few months before, they had machine guns to keep us in, then they put locks and guards to keep us out.

Rev. Sentoku Mayeda, from an interview published in the Rafu Shimpo, April 19, 1975
Without being at all presumptuous, one could say that the annual Manzanar Pilgrimage is the one event of genuine social importance conducted by Japanese Americans today.

—Dwight Chuman in the Rafu Shimpo, April 19, 1975
Through the years the religious services have remained the focal point of the Pilgrimages. Rev. Wakhiro (lt.) and Rev. Mayeda (rt.) appear together for the last time in the 1976 Pilgrimage.
Every year we have to plan the Pilgrimage program around the weather—the hot sun, possibility of Spring showers, and especially the wind. In 1976 the wind blew, and the sand got into everything, but people had a better understanding of what camp was like.
Since the beginning, we have done work projects at the Pilgrimages. Everyone enthusiastically participates and digs in (literally). In '77, we replaced the fence posts around the cemetery.
The theme this year was "a celebration of friends. Those who aided Japanese Americans during World War II were recognized during the program. Following the pattern established in past Pilgrimages, everyone present shared in a big pot-luck lunch. Religious services were conducted with the offering of flowers at the cemetery monument.
Displays of historical photos were set up.

...and you didn't need to know how to dance "Tanko Bushi"; a little instruction preceded the afternoon Ondo.
"Today, we honor the Issei who began the Pilgrimage idea, Rev. Sentoku Mayeda. For twenty-four years, Rev. Mayeda came to Manzanar with his family on Memorial Day weekend. It was his idea that gave birth to the annual pilgrimage... He was here in 1969 with us who were two to three generations younger than he... In his memory, for his persistence and humility, we pledge to continue the pilgrimages."

From a speech given by Sue Kunitomi Embrey
Some of the participants in a "mini-tour" of Manzanar.

"A young girl named Grace Yoshioka wrote in an essay for her teacher at Amache, Colorado, 'Ten or twenty years may pass but memories of this camp, as well as assembly centers, shall never be forgotten by everybody that participated. In fact, it'll be handed down through generations.' "
"Thirty-six years and ten pilgrimages later, we remember this camp, not only those of us who participated, but others who have come to see, to listen, and to learn."
The theme of the 1979 Manzanar Pilgrimage was "A Celebration of Our Community in Movement — Past, Present and Future". A time for people of different generations, and different backgrounds, to come together.
Author’s note:
This poem must be recited out loud, in the wind of springtime, standing up on the back of a flatbed truck.
This poem must be accompanied by gestures, by multitudes in the landscape chanting the Japanese name of Manzanar, invoking the presence of home.
This poem has a before, and a continual after. This poem is populated by The People of Manzanar, thousands of people beneath each word, holding them up to the light.
This poem is full of Grassroots, the Vehicles of Social Change.
This poem is full of You. May our Pilgrimage continue.

Manzanar
Whatever we have to say, it is a magnificent day.
This is what the sky tells us, the sun says, clouds and snow among the mountains.
It is majestic, we say, the inhabitants—even the wire shines, graced with our presence.
Whoever feels the need for compassion and commitment should join us, we say, working along in the enjoyment of renewing concentration through the mending of fences that hold nothing out, or in, but are the compelling reminder of when there was too much to say, or too much of nothing; therefore, they hold everything, out and in, like a shimmering spirit, their barbs gone soft with love through the veins.
Listen. We have names like Warren, Sue, and Victor.
We use these names like love. We give these names with love through the air, to be received by another. Our names are who we are, like songs with wings.
Let me tell you of Edison, my brother, my brother. I say this, and he is here—the image of integrity, of conviction.
As long as I stand, Edison is here—the bright glow of my shadow.

The sunlight within us also says “Wakahiro.”
Listen. Listen.
Reach into your own depths of sun and shadow and bring forth who you are.
There is pain there, a lot of heartbreak about this place, but there is also power and joy and love and laughter.
This is part of our enduring geography. This is part of who we are. No one can take that away.
And whatever we have to say, it is a magnificent day.
Far off in the distance our names are shimmering in the heat.
Shimmering. Shimmering. Shimmering.
Filling the valley floor, the peaks, filling the foothills with song.
Let us say this, then, in blessing, in celebration, lifting our spirits to sing:
Is who we are.
Is who we are.
Is. Who. We. Are.

Lawson Fusao Inada
14 May 77
12:15 pm, Manzanar
manzanar

this poem is dedicated to the
manzanar committee, the brothers
and sisters who journeyed down
to pay tribute to all the people
who spent part of their lives, or
their last days, or their beginning
at manzanar.

we stopped at lone pine
as the sun rose
putting a new light
in our eyes
we had been on the road
since the night before
we were all
a little tired
a little hungry
but our patience
was still with us

at the only cafe in town
which transformed
into the only bar in town
at night
complete with a pool room
with one table
and two pin ball machines
we opened the door
one by one
and filled four booths
and a third
of the counter
from the juke box
came tammy wynnette
freddy fender
and the flying burrito brothers
i stared up at the moose head
which stared back down
at my ham and eggs
the waitress
told me
they were getting cold
where are you goin
she asked

manzanar
i replied

she paused a second
and thought

real hard like
then she said
my daughter's married to this philipino and
i stopped her short
and laughed
until we finally left

the sign said
manzanar
one mile

at noon
we were joined
by some 350
issei
nisei
sansei
yonsei
roaming the campsite
in search
of old memories
of origins
of roots
of a new life
the ghost of the guard towers
became the wind
threatened us to leave
the sun struggled
the fence around the cemetery
once again repaired
our sweat washed
the rust
from the barbed wire
fresh flowers for your graves
the chanting from the priest
i bow my head
the echo of the gong
i feel it inside my skin
incense burning awakening spirits
i see a grave of broken dishes
and hearts
lifted from confinement
i see a blind old issei man
touching the stones
which surround the monument
i see a brown ear jack rabbit
running for the fence
now he is also free
i see the ghosts rise from the earth
and calm the wind
i see the white snow
slowly melting off the mountains
another winter is gone
i see dust and cactus and lizards
blending into the hot desert home
i see the shadows of barracks
their imprints are left in the sand

the next town
seventeen miles away
is called
independence

manzanar
you became an experience
that followed me home
it is with me now
it will never leave my soul
and
i will be back
to offer snow water
for your parched lips
to place a perfect stone
on your grave
to sing songs
so you might hear
to dance as you might have danced
to a taiko drum
in celebration of life
to become a part of you
as
you become a part of me.

lane kiyomi nishikawa
copyright 1977
## MANZANAR COMMITTEE

### Founding Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warren Furutani</th>
<th>Sue K. Embrey</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jim Matsuoka</td>
<td>Rex Takahashi</td>
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<td>Faye Matsuoka</td>
<td>Pat Rosa</td>
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<td>Don Runstrom</td>
<td>Ron Rundstrom</td>
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<td>Susan Rundstrom</td>
<td>Henry Matsumura</td>
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<td>Bill Leong</td>
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### Past and Present Members

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<th>Cynthia Chono</th>
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<td>Kenny Endo</td>
<td>Grace Harada</td>
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<td>Tom Harada</td>
<td>Amy Uno Ishii (1921-1981)</td>
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<td>R. F. Kado</td>
<td>Jeanne Katsuro</td>
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<td>Tom Kurai</td>
<td>Howard Masuda</td>
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<td>Rob Narita</td>
<td>Janice Tanaka</td>
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<td>Sheridan Tatsuno</td>
<td>George Thow</td>
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<td>Mariko Yamada</td>
<td>Denise Yamamoto</td>
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<td>Tak Yamamoto</td>
<td>Stan Yamashiro</td>
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<td>Ken Honji</td>
<td>Grace Masuda</td>
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<td>Tomoo Hisamoto</td>
<td>Shoho Kiyono</td>
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<td>Masa Shimada</td>
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### Manzanar Committee, San Francisco

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<tr>
<th>Karl Yoneda</th>
<th>Edison Uno (1929-1976)</th>
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<td>Elaine Yoneda</td>
<td>Carol Hayashino</td>
</tr>
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### Manzanar Committee, Chicago

Diane Kayano and friends

### Manzanar Committee, New York

Mary Kochiyama and
Asian Americans for Action

41
The Manzanar Committee wishes to acknowledge the following groups and individuals for their support of the Manzanar Pilgrimage:

Asian American Drug Abuse Program
Asian American Studies Center, California State University at San Francisco
California State Department of Parks and Recreation
East Los Angeles Outreach Team
Eastern California Museum, Inyo County
The Hon. Alex Garcia
Helen George
Inyo County Department of Parks and Recreation
Inyo County Board of Supervisors
John Ito
Japanese American Citizens League
Japanese Welfare Rights Organization
Little Tokyo Peoples Rights Organization
Lone Pine Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles City Council
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
M and G Lawnmower Shop
Roy Murano
Fred Muto
Dennis Nishikawa
Shi Nomura
Jim Olguin
John Saito
Seinan, Inc.
Self Development of People,
    Presbyterian Synod of Southern California
Senshin Buddhist Temple
Services to Asian American Youth
Southern California Flower Growers, Inc.
Tri-County Ambulance Service, Inyo County
Tule Lake Pilgrimage Committee
Visual Communications
Yellow Brotherhood
Toshiko Yoshida

To these, and all others, who have supported the pilgrimages this past decade, we express our sincerest appreciation.