

Healthcare Workers in Manzanar

A brief collection of oral histories and visual resources

**this particular collection of resources mostly excludes perspectives of patients*

1. March 21-23, 1942: Frank Chuman, Dr. James Goto, nurse Fumiko Gohata, Dr. Yoshiye Togasaki, Dr. Masako Kusayanagi, and nurse Yone Akita are among the first Japanese Americans to arrive at Manzanar. They are tasked with setting up a healthcare system from nothing.
2. Dr. Togasaki, concerned about potential outbreaks in Manzanar's crowded, shoddy living conditions, immediately plans an immunization and infectious disease screening campaign for new arrivals, and recruits people to work for her, like Tami Oda Kasamatsu.
 - a. MANZ-1163, Tamiye Oda Kasamatsu:

"When the bus stopped in camp, Dr. Togasaki got on the bus and she said all the young persons will have to work in the kitchen or the hospital. So I chose the hospital. You know, everyone had to be inoculated. And so that's where I started...

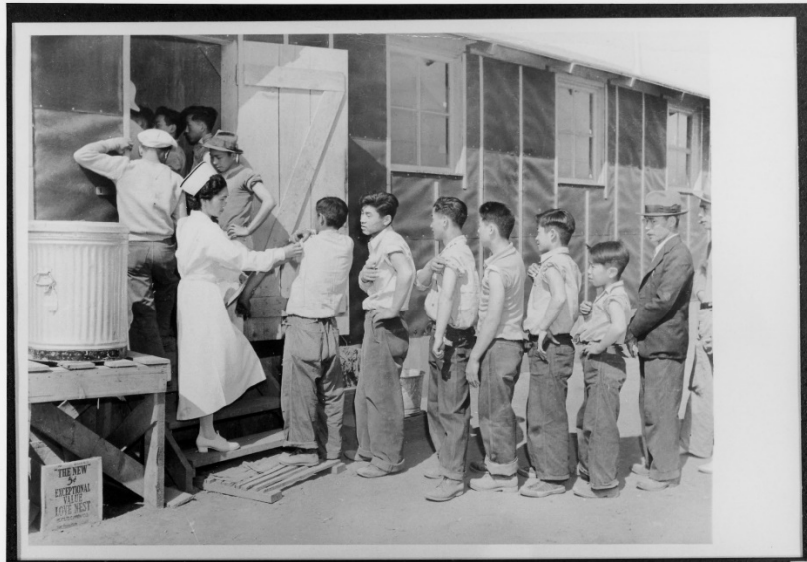
We did the filing and took records of the people who were inoculated. And a lot of the men wouldn't come in so we had to track them down... We had the list and so we gave the list to the – whoever's in charge and they tracked them down and brought them in. It was mostly men. The women, no problem."



*Photo: Tami at the new Manzanar hospital with friends and coworkers. She is in the back row, second from right.
Courtesy Tamiye Kasamatsu.*



Dr. James Goto immunizes a child in Manzanar, April 2, 1942. Photo by Clem Albers.



People line up for immunization. Photo by Clem Albers, April 2, 1942.



Dr. James Goto immunizing a young man in Manzanar, April 2, 1942. Photo by Clem Albers.



Immunizations at Manzanar, April 2, 1942. Photo by Clem Albers.

3. Under Dr. Goto as Chief Medical Officer, and Frank Chuman as Hospital Administrator, the medical staff set up a rudimentary hospital in a barracks in Block 7.
 - a. MANZ-1125, Dr, Masako Kusayanagi Miura, oral history excerpt on 1st clinic
 - i. “When we got there, we were just in the barracks, just like anybody else, you know, regular barracks with nothing there. This was – we were supposed to run a clinic. So, we had a hot plate, we had a wash basin, and boiled everything in the wash basin over the hot plate; gloves, instruments, everything. And then, when we had surgery or anything, this is how we had to do it.”



First hospital in Manzanar, Block 7, Building 8. Photo by Dorothea Lange, July 2, 1942

- b. MANZ-1019, Frank Chuman, oral history excerpt on 1st hospital
 - i. “Whatever there was in the way of a medical clinic, medical facility, was not there. The building that we were in was on Block One, so-called. Building Two, facing out to the dirt road. And we - - and so what we took over as the medical clinic was a 20 by 25 feet area facing the unpaved road, as the medical clinic... Nothing in there, no equipment, no nothing in there, in the way of medical facilities, except for very, very few medical supplies... At least we had immunization supplies, bandages, gauze, we had a sterilizer; I remember we had a sterilizer. So we could only do very, very minor things such as first aid for cuts and bruises, for colds, but most of it was done in mandatory immunizations, so every day, everybody would line up, go inside, get the shot from the nurse, and the doctor would be handling some other stuff.

As a matter of fact, there was a rope that was hung in the middle of this unit. And in the back of the room is where Dr. Goto and I had our cots with the straw tick mattresses where we slept during the night. There was a blanket over there. And then in front of that, there was the clinic. So that was our clinic.”



Patients inside Manzanar's first hospital. Photo by Dorothea Lange, July 3, 1942.



Women's ward in Manzanar's first hospital. Photo by Dorothea Lange, July 3, 1942



Dr. Takahashi, Ear, Nose, and Throat specialist, assessing a patient in Manzanar's first hospital. Photo by Dorothea Lange, July 3, 1942.



Hospital latrines for patients at Manzanar's first hospital. Photo by Dorothea Lange, July 3, 1942.

- c. Outside perspective: George H. Dean excerpt from Harlan Unrau's Historic Resource Study, 1996, on deplorable conditions of 1st hospital at time of WCCA to WRA transfer
 - i. 'On June 1, when the WRA took over administrative control of Manzanar, the improvised and primitive hospital facilities in the camp were deplorable. On some of the hospital beds there were no mattresses, "straw ticking being used." In the nursery which housed five babies, there was "one bassinet, a common cardboard box and three wooden cribs built by Japanese workmen in the center from discarded building materials from the new hospital construction." There were only 12 urinals for the hospital patients. There was a shortage of pitchers, and "tin cans were used in several instances to supply drinking water to the patients." Nurses were forced to go outside and use an open spigot to wash their hands between patients. Water from wash basins used in bathing or caring for hospital patients was disposed "of on the open ground around the barracks, creating a possible source for the spread of infection in Manzanar's blowing dust." No telephones had been installed in the hospital.

Although the supply of drugs and medicines was considered to be adequate, the operating table, lighting, and surgical equipment were unsatisfactory. Despite the inadequate equipment in the hospital, however, "operations of a delicate nature" had been "successfully performed, including fourteen appendectomies and the removal of a cancer of the cecum, all without a fatality."

4. New hospital opens July 22, 1942

- a. MANZ-1019, Frank Chuman, interviewed by Kari Coughlin
 - i. "FC: ...Everything that is suitable for a base hospital for the Army, that was sent to us, because everything at Manzanar...was based upon the standard supplies for an Army base hospital. Not for a field hospital, but for a base hospital... they give you good stuff.
KC: So they didn't skimp on the camp, in terms of medical supplies, at all?
FC: No, they did not. They sent us good stuff, which every Army base used. If there was an Army base, that's what we were. And the construction was built along the same blueprints as all the other base hospitals. Same, identical features, maybe with slight modifications. Otherwise - - so everything that was supplied to the hospital was of good grade, and suitable for soldiers.

Now, the irony of sending us medical supplies and equipment for the base hospital was that it was only pointed towards able-bodied soldiers. So what do you do about pregnant women, small children, elderly? What do you do with them, even though it's a base hospital? Those supplies which were needed, and which were requisitioned, had to be bought outside. So we'd go from the hospital by requisition down to the headquarters, a procurement officer. And the procurement officer would then try to get what we needed to supply the people that, obviously, were not able-bodied soldiers. "



21-year-old artist George Yano painted scenes from around Manzanar, including the new hospital, in February 1943.
Courtesy Martha Smeltzer West.



Nurse Aiko Hamaguchi with a patient in the new hospital's maternity ward. Photo by Ansel Adams, 1943. Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum/Ralph P. Merritt.

b. MANZ-1125 Dr. Masako Kusayanagi Miura, interviewed by Alisa Lynch

- i. “MM: ...we had old people, young people, women, children, everybody. It was a general population. So, whatever came through. Sometimes it would be just something very simple, sometimes it – I remember I treated a patient with a general paresis of the insane. And, of course, nobody knew what to do with him, but I had just finished training, or I was in the midst of being trained for that type of thing anyway. So, I knew what to do. The only thing is that I didn’t have enough material to work with, because we used to give malaria or hot, heat therapy, which we had no heat box or anything, and we had no malaria to give. So, all I could think of is we had typhoid, which we were giving shots, and increase the dosage to give the fever, so I gave fever shots up, gave him several rounds of fever that way. And, he seemed to have gotten much better, and so he was able to go back into the community.

AL: Who were the other doctors on staff when you were there?

MM: All right, there was Doctor Takahashi; he was an ear, nose, and throat man. And, there was Doctor Togasaki; and she was a communicable disease doctor. And then, there was Doctor Iwasa, from Salinas, who was general practitioner. And then, there was Goto, who was a surgeon. And then myself; I was in training in dermatology.

AL: Did you do much with dermatology in Manzanar?

MM: Well, I did most of it, but then I had to pitch in and do everything else, because with five doctors there’s – we all took turns overnight taking night calls, and so we had to take everything that came along.”



Patient at new hospital. Courtesy Arnold Maeda.



Photos courtesy Eastern California Museum/Ralph P. Merritt.

- c. MANZ-1182B, Arnold Maeda. Interviewed by Kirk Peterson
- i. AM: I just remember that I went to the hospital and got a job before I graduated. We graduated on Sunday and I went to work on Monday. And later I thought what a dumb thing to do. I could have taken two, three months off and loafed around, being behind barbed wire. But that's what I did... we call it the bedpan brigade. But we did everything, all the way from cleaning the walls of the rooms that were vacated by sick patients, and changing the bed, bathing them. Or I remember one man that had a trachea and we had to clean the gunk out of it, and take bodies to the morgue...

We were short on the staff so we had to watch every surgery that came in, and then if there were emergencies, we had to go back to work... Sometime we'd be watching an outdoor movie, and then an ambulance would ramble along, and then we'd say uh-oh, we've got to go to work. So they'd take us back to the hospital...

KP: So what kind of duties did you have working as a surgical orderly?

AM: Well, first of all I had to bring the patient down to the operating room and then I'd help transfer the body, the patient onto the operating table. Then one of my duties would be to set the patient up for a blood pressure reading, or if they had a spinal anesthetic, I'd have to hold them down and tuck their body in so the spine is curved. So during surgery I'd have to monitor the blood pressure and report to the doctor, and if it was low or something I had to break open the glass vial, fill it with whatever it was in there, and inject them. We were doing things if they knew now, they'd maybe put us in jail or something... Then I had to put the bandage – oh, before that, if the doctor was perspiring a lot, had to wipe their brow or put the bandage on. And then sometime there would be a fly in the operating room, Ms. Akido goes, "Arnold, get the fly." You know, they have to snap at you so you can do it right away.

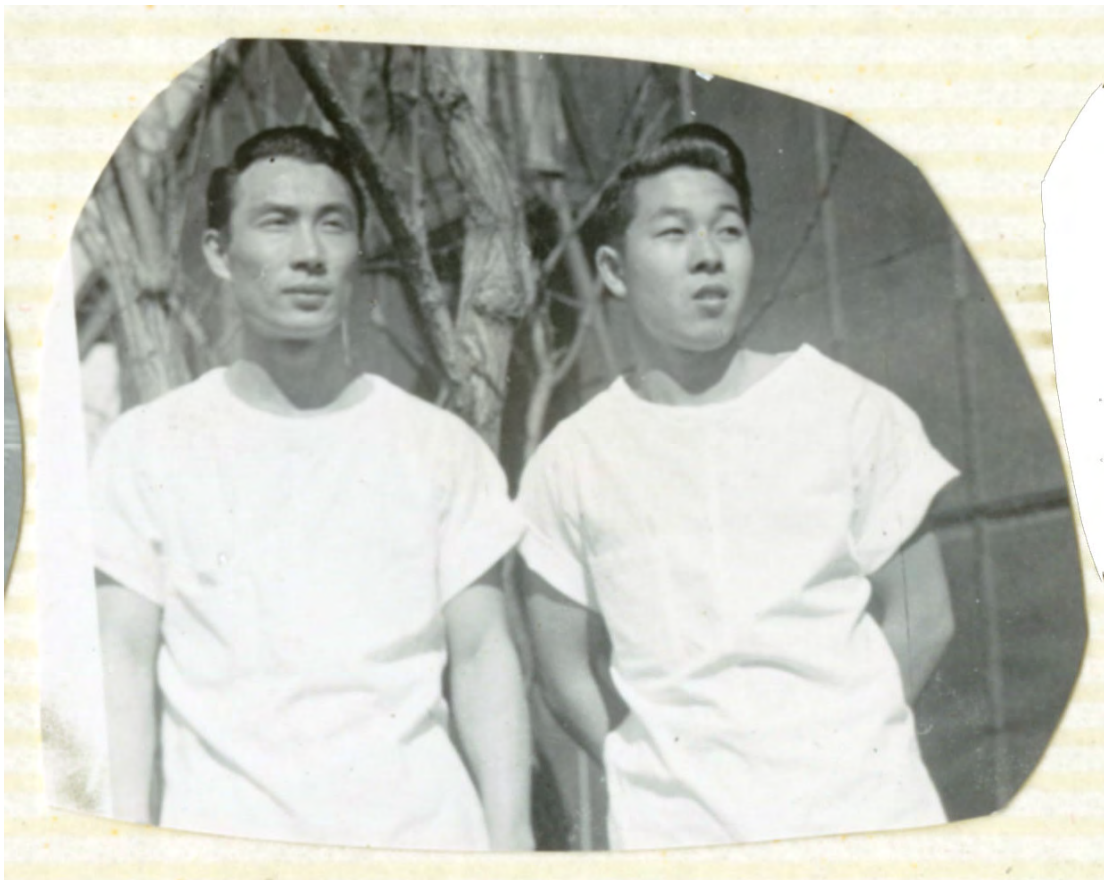
I heard that one doctor say that after a surgery, the doctors would tell each other the dirtiest joke they could think of to get the pressure off of them. But I remember we used to do eye surgeries, and somebody would ask me how did it turn out, did I get queasy or anything. And I

said, “No.” And they, “Good, good. That’s a good sign.” I guess they expected me to get into the medical field or something. But we got \$19 a month, and my peers couldn’t believe it...

KP: So you’re getting paid the same as the doctors.

AM: Yeah, I know, and I couldn’t understand that. It was maybe because we were on twenty four hour call, and we had to sterilize the surgical instruments, fold the sheets... Once a week or whatever, we had tonsilleotomies, especially for children, and I had to bring them down one by one. We strapped them down on the gurney and you could tuck your arm in there so they can’t kick around and get away. One day, one boy got away, and I ran after the boy. He got away. I couldn’t run fast enough to catch him. (Laughter.)

Those were good training days. And they had a program, because of the shortage that they were talking about, orderlies being in – what do they call that room? Where they deliver babies. And one night I got a call to report to the women’s ward. I went over there, throwing gowns at me, dressing me up to go in there. I said, “What is it? What am I going to do?” I don’t remember now, but I got shoved into the delivery room... But we really were short of staff.”



Arnold Maeda, right, in his job as an orderly at the new hospital. Courtesy Arnold Maeda.

- d. MANZ-1476, Amy Ioki; this story appears in other oral histories as well, including those of Frank Chuman and Arnold Maeda.
 - i. “Well, I will tell you a story about my husband. He was two years older than I was. He was going to UCLA when the war broke out. He [worked] in the motor pool, and they would come to the hospital. I guess they had the ambulance they drove, too, I don’t know. He said they would go to the morgue and play poker. He said, “Nobody came in there to bother us.” (Laughter.)”



Broken poker chip found in drain at the Manzanar hospital morgue by NPS archeology staff; c2019.



Manzanar ambulance and crew. Courtesy Eastern California Museum/Ralph P. Merritt.

5. Healthcare workers face tragedy

- a. MANZ-1125, Dr. Masako Kusayanagi Miura oral history excerpt on treating Hikoji Takeuchi, May 16, 1942, at 1st hospital
- i. “AL: Did you have any surgeries or major medical things you had to deal with in that first clinic?
MM: Yeah, I think the first one was that boy who had the gunshot on the elbow... I understand that he went out there to pick some wood outside, just outside the area there. Some of the wood was just strewn outside, and he asked the MP if it was all right to go pick the wood so he could make a chair and table for his mother. And, apparently, he thought the MP said it was all right, so he went out there to pick the wood up. While he was doing so, he got shot in the elbow, and naturally, we had to do surgery to remove the gunshot, the bullet. And so, we had to boil everything over the hotplate, and we did the surgery, and fortunately, he recovered... And you could see all of the MPs lining up at the end of the ward, you know, testing the guns... and they looked as if they had a lot of itchy fingers.”
- b. MANZ-1004, Hikoji Takeuchi on MP shooting him while collecting scrap lumber, May 16, 1942
- i. “You know we didn’t have a thing in our apartment, so-called apartment. There’s no chair, no table. The only thing we can do is I tell my mom, you know, I says, “Mom, sit down someplace.” And the only thing that she can sit down is the cot, and, there again, you know, I’m thinking, “Gee whiz, my mom, she has no place to sit down.” There again, I start thinking about what I told my dad, you know. I said, “Don’t worry. I’ll take care of Mom.” And here again, there is nothing I can do. I had no tools, no nothing to do anything for Mom. That’s when I wanted to go out and get some scrap. There had to be scrap woods around there. They were building. I want to go out and find some scrap wood and make some chair for Mom...”

You know, there was scrap woods about ten feet high. I can see scrap woods over there, you know. I thought, “Gee, well with all that I could make tables and chairs for Mom.” And that’s when I saw this MP guy, so I asked him, “Hey, can one go over there and get some scrap woods?” And the guy says, “Sure.” So that’s why I went over to the scrap pile, and I was getting some scraps, and then I heard somebody yelling at me, calling me, so I looked up, and it was this MP. And he was going like this to me, you know. So I had the scrap woods in my arm, and when he went like this, beckoned to me, so I started walking towards him, and must have been, I’d say, thirty feet, maybe more, maybe forty feet, all of a sudden I see this guy here lowering his rifle and aiming at me. And I thought, “What the hell is he doing?” You know? And that’s when I heard it go off. And I had my leather jacket, my t-shirt. That’s all I had, t-shirt. And evidently the impact – I must have fallen on impact, and I found myself picking myself up as soon as I heard the gun go off. I felt things going through my body, like hot iron rod running through me, you know. And when I started picking myself up then that’s when I realized, “My God, I was full of blood.” I thought, “My God, I’ve been shot!”...

So when I picked myself up and then I started running, and I remember telling him that’s a very cowardly act that he just did. Like I said, these are the very things that can happen if and when should anything like this ever happens again. It could happen to another young kid. And they’ll try to blame it on his own doing... If it wasn’t for the fact that Mom didn’t have a table, nor a chair, I would not have gone looking around for scrap wood, number one. You know this is something, you know, your mother not having a chair to sit down on for a kid who had promised his dad, “I’ll look after Mom. Don’t worry.” This is the desire of a kid who wants to take the responsibility of his dad in his places of his dad, and yet there’s no chair, no table. That hurts the kid deep in here, you know.”



Hikoji Takeuchi.

- c. MANZ-1164, Paul Takagi, oral history excerpt on sitting up all night with James Kanagawa, watching him die after being shot by an MP in the Manzanar revolt of December 6, 1942. James Kanagawa died December 11, 1942.
- i. "I was the hospital orderly when James [Kanagawa] was shot in the back and I was assigned to him to take over the observation and just being with him on the night shift. And James was lying on his right side because he was shot in the back. And there was a drainage bag, but no oxygen, no hydration system, and he really, really needed it. I wondered where in the hell was the doctor and the nurses, damn place was empty. Or at least it appeared empty. During the night he said it twice, "I don't want to die, I don't want to die."

I am watching him like this, I have my pea coat on, I am cold and my head is saying, "Come on, Paul, let's go for a walk." And that's what my head said, but the body didn't move. Later on, it said, "Come on Paul, let's go get some coffee." I can't move. I am frozen and really, really frozen...

Finally, 8 o'clock came along. I quit and I really, really had to. And for five months I did nothing. I just got books from the library and just read all night...

Anyway, it did something to me. In all my life, it became something in my consciousness that influenced everything I did. It's not anger so much as it is an understanding of what poor people undergo, defenseless people undergo in this country, and it is really a criticism of this country, not necessarily the officials and doctors that were here at Manzanar, but this is a more general problem than in this small place. It was demonstrated by what I saw that night, and felt that night, and felt ever since, to this day. And it guided me in terms of the kind of research I did as a professor at Berkeley and everything I do and write is related to the oppression of defenseless people."



Funeral of James Ito and James Kanagawa, shot by military police in the Manzanar revolt. Photo courtesy Shirley Nagatomi Okabe.

6. The legacy of the Manzanar hospital

- a. MANZ-1553, Fumi Knox oral history excerpt on her mom's pregnancy, being born at Manzanar hospital, and her mom's tiny act of resistance in having her always say that's where she was born
 - i. RM: ...What was it like for your mom to be pregnant and have a baby in a place like Manzanar?
FK: I would imagine it was pretty hard. And my father wasn't there for a lot of the time because my father was looking for a job and a place to relocate to. And in fact, that's how I think I was conceived was when my mother and father went out on one of the trips to -- I think they went to Chicago and New York. Well, because my grandmother lived with us, you know, in the

barracks. And then my father wasn't there actually when I was born. So I would think it was pretty hard for her. And you know, we're sort of speculating that she may have had to walk to the hospital. I don't know if she did or not. But it was way across the camp.

RM: You know, your mom was born in Sacramento. She's from California. And yet, this was being done to her and her family. Did she tell you how she processed the news that she was in, you know, your sister and your dad and your grandma and aunt were all going to be forced to leave home and go to Manzanar?

FK: Yeah. You know, she just said that, well, they had to do it. There wasn't any choice. It was, kind of, that saying of *shikata ga nai*. You can't do anything about it. So they don't feel too much emotionally about it, is what it seemed like. You know, she never also seemed to be particularly angry about it the way my aunt was. My aunt seemed to realize the injustice of the whole thing and talked about it, you know, later when I was growing up.

But the one thing my mom did that always struck me was when I was starting kindergarten. She said, "Now, if anybody asks you where you were born" – and I always start to cry when I say this. But she said, "You tell them, you were born at Manzanar Relocation Camp in Inyo County." That it was like, she wanted to emphasize that and make sure it wasn't forgotten. And she didn't say just to say Manzanar, California. Or, I don't know why you would say that to your child when she's about to go to kindergarten anyway, about where they were born. But I remember that made me, for a long time when I was asked, you know, on a form or something, where was I born? I didn't realize I could just say Manzanar. And I always thought, oh, I have to write Manzanar Relocation Camp. And that always seemed so weird. But, anyway. It was sort of, the one act – I mean, it wasn't really defiance, but it seemed like, definitely she wanted to make a point of that.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
VITAL STATISTICS

CERTIFIED COPY OF BIRTH RECORD

DISTRICT No. 1450 Registrar's No. 55

FULL NAME OF CHILD <u>Fumino Tsuchiya</u>		DATE IF NAME ADDED BY SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT	
PLACE OF BIRTH: COUNTY <u>Inyo</u> CITY OR TOWN <u>Manzanar, California</u> <small>IF OUTSIDE CITY OR TOWN LIMITS, WRITE RURAL</small>		NAME OF HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION <u>Manzanar Hospital</u> <small>IF NOT IN HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION, GIVE STREET NUMBER OR LOCATION</small>	
SEX <u>Female</u>	TWIN OR IF SO—BORN TRIPLET <u>Single</u> 1ST 2D 3D	DATE OF BIRTH <u>February 26 1945 4:03P.</u> <small>MONTH BY NAME DAY YEAR HOUR</small>	
FATHER OF CHILD FULL NAME <u>Kiyotsugu Tsuchiya</u> COLOR <u>Japanese</u> OR RACE BIRTHPLACE <u>Japan</u>		MOTHER OF CHILD FULL MAIDEN NAME <u>Chie Konishi</u> COLOR <u>Japanese</u> OR RACE BIRTHPLACE <u>Sacramento, California.</u>	
DATE RECEIVED BY LOCAL REGISTRAR <u>Mar. 5, 1945.</u>		I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child, on the date above stated.	
REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE <u>Mamie Reynolds</u>		ATTENDANT'S OWN SIGNATURE <u>Morse Little</u>	
BY _____		ADDRESS <u>Manzanar, Cal.</u> DATE SIGNED <u>3/1/45.</u>	

CERTIFICATION BY LOCAL REGISTRAR OR COUNTY RECORDER

THIS IS TO CERTIFY, That the foregoing is a true and correct copy of statements appearing on the recorded birth of the above named child, as filed in the ~~local~~ county records and is issued under the provisions of Section 10202, Health and Safety Code.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, Witness my hand and seal this 17th day of Oct. 1947,
at Independence, California.

FEE 1.00 Pd.

[SEAL]

By Mamie Reynolds
Nellie Fris
Deputy Recorder.

FORM XI 36478 7-44 100M SPO

Fumino Tsuchiya (later Knox) birth record. Courtesy Fumi Knox and Lourdes Nicholls.



Chie Tsuchiya, holding baby Fumi, sitting next to Fumi's sister in their barracks, 1945. Courtesy Lourdes Nicholls.



Maternity ward at Manzanar hospital. Photo by Ansel Adams, c1943.



Spearheaded by Irene Furukawa, left, people born in Manzanar have gathered yearly at the Manzanar Reunion in Las Vegas. NPS photo, May 2018, Manzanar Reunion.

MANZ-1163 and 1163B, Tamiye Oda Kasamatsu:

“The closest friends are the ones I met at Manzanar... The hospital group, we used to get together after the war... Oh, we kept it up. They used to come here when there were about twenty of us. Let’s see now, when was it? Anyway, they used to come to our place about forty years...Yeah, ever since we came back, we used to get together. Then Amy loki, she said most of the people were in her area, so she said let’s have it at her place, so we switched over there...”

Going to a camp like that wasn’t good. But I think going to camp like that changed my life, too, my friends, the way I think.”



Tamiye Oda Kasamatsu, middle row, third from right in white blouse, turned 102 in December 2021. She continued to meet with friends who were also Manzanar hospital workers for her entire life. Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum/Tamiye Oda Kasamatsu.

Books of interest to learn more:

- *Nurse of Manzanar: A Japanese American's World War II Journey*, Samuel Nakamura, derived from "My Memories of World War II" by Toshiko Eto Nakamura
- *Silent Scars of Healing Hands: Oral Histories of Japanese American Doctors in World War II Detention Camps*, Naomi Hirahara and Gwenn M. Jensen