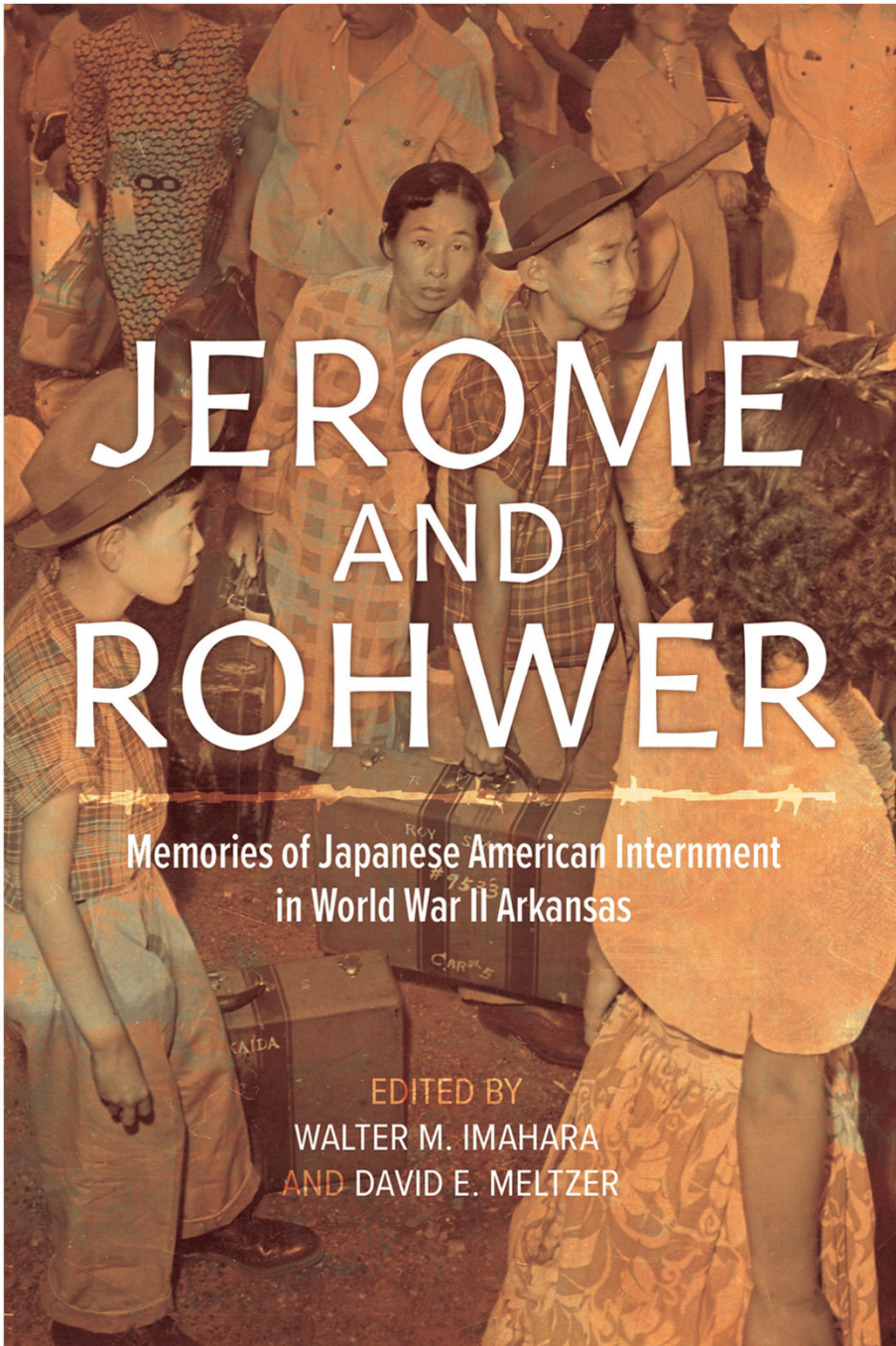


Jerome and Rohwer

Memories of Japanese American Internment
in World War II Arkansas

Presentation by David E. Meltzer, with recollections by Walter M. Imahara



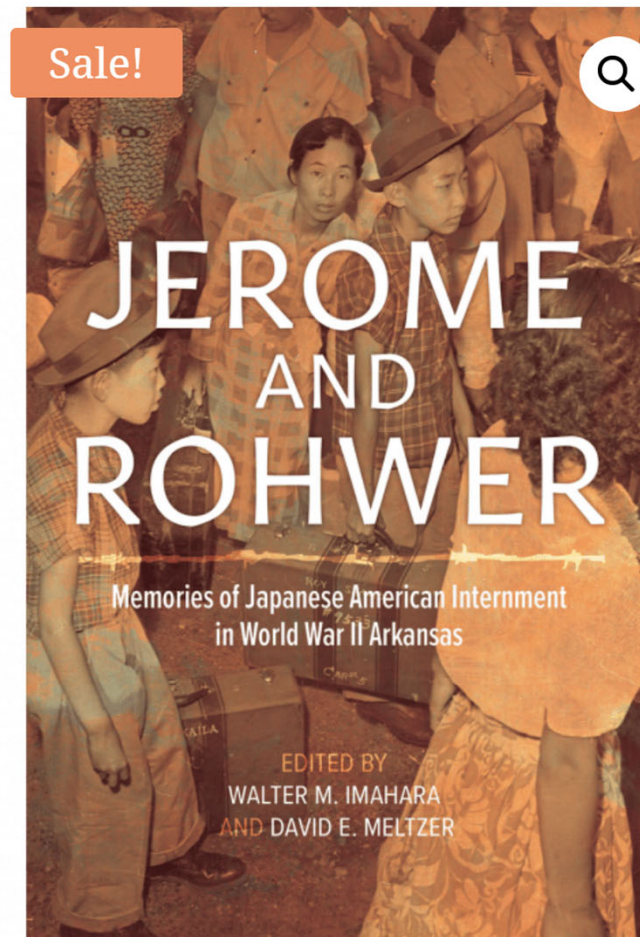
JEROME AND ROHWER

Memories of Japanese American Internment
in World War II Arkansas

EDITED BY
WALTER M. IMAHARA
AND DAVID E. MELTZER



Home / Biography / Autobiography / Memoir / Jerome and Rohwer



Jerome and Rohwer

~~\$29.95~~ **\$22.46**

Memories of Japanese American Internment in World War II Arkansas

Edited by Walter M. Imahara and David E. Meltzer

6 x 9, 236 pages, 101 photographs

978-1-68226-188-0 (paper)

January 2022

ADD TO CART

Categories: Arkansas and the Region, Asian American, Biography / Autobiography / Memoir

Search Our Titles

1942: Mass Internment of U.S. Citizens

In the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, a Presidential order was issued forcing over 110,000 Americans of Japanese descent into prison camps, including nearly 70,000 U.S. citizens.

1942: Mass Internment of U.S. Citizens

- Not accused of any crime, these citizens and their families were imprisoned behind barbed wire, guarded by armed soldiers.
- Many of the internees lost their homes, their farms, their businesses, and their personal property—never to be recovered.
- Many were relocated thousands of miles away from their West Coast homes, some as far as Arkansas in the Jerome and Rohwer relocation centers.
- This book recounts the personal stories of former internees of Jerome and Rohwer.

The James M. Imahara Family

- Highly successful farm owner and businessman in Florin, California, James Imahara was a leader in the Japanese American farming community. His oldest son was Walter M. Imahara.
- In May, 1942, the Imahara family was forced to leave their home, abandoning their farm business and all of their personal property except what they could carry with them.
- The family was moved to the “Fresno Assembly Center,” and forced to live in former horse stalls for five months, before forcible relocation to the Jerome Relocation Center in Denson, Arkansas.

Book of Personal Recollections of Internment

Former internee Walter Imahara explains
how this book came about...

[Video clips from *Legacies and Lunch* presentation to Central Arkansas Library System,
December 1, 2021; Heather Zbinden, Outreach Coordinator]



Heather Zbinden



Walter Imahara



David Meltzer

zoom

Background: Racial and Ethnic Enmity

During the early 1900s, thousands of Japanese immigrants arrived on the West Coast, and developed extremely successful farming communities.

Background: Racial and Ethnic Enmity

The Imaharas were one of those successful farming families...



zoom

Background: Racial and Ethnic Enmity

A combination of jealousy and lingering racial and ethnic hatreds combined to create intense anti-Japanese sentiment among many Caucasian Americans...





Japanese-American business owner proclaiming his American citizenship

Pearl Harbor, and Executive Order 9066

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, a pressure campaign developed to remove all Americans of Japanese ancestry away from their West Coast homes. Finally, in February 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066.

EXECUTIVE ORDER

- - - - -

AUTHORIZING THE SECRETARY OF WAR TO PRESCRIBE
MILITARY AREAS

WHEREAS the successful prosecution of the war requires every possible protection against espionage and against sabotage to national-defense material, national-defense premises, and national-defense utilities as defined in Section 4, Act of April 20, 1918, 40 Stat. 533, as amended by the Act of November 30, 1940, 54 Stat. 1220, and the Act of August 21, 1941, 55 Stat. 655 (U. S. C., Title 50, Sec. 104):

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, and Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate, whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military

- 2 -

Commander may impose in his discretion. The Secretary of War is hereby authorized to provide for residents of any such area who are excluded therefrom, such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary, in the judgment of the Secretary of War or the said Military Commander, and until other arrangements are made, to accomplish the purpose of this order. The designation of military areas in any region or locality shall supersede designations of prohibited and restricted areas by the Attorney General under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, and shall supersede the responsibility and authority of the Attorney General under the said Proclamations in respect of such prohibited and restricted areas.

I hereby further authorize and direct the Secretary of War and the said Military Commanders to take such other steps as he or the appropriate Military Commander may deem advisable to enforce compliance with the restrictions applicable to each Military area hereinabove authorized to be designated, including the use of Federal troops and other Federal Agencies, with authority to accept assistance of state and local agencies.

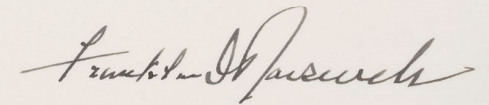
- 3 -

I hereby further authorize and direct all Executive Departments, independent establishments and other Federal Agencies, to assist the Secretary of War or the said Military Commanders in carrying out this Executive Order, including the furnishing of medical aid, hospitalization, food, clothing, transportation, use of land, shelter, and other supplies, equipment, utilities, facilities, and services.

This order shall not be construed as modifying or limiting in any way the authority heretofore granted under Executive Order No. 8972, dated December 12, 1941, nor shall it be construed as limiting or modifying the duty and responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with respect to the investigation of alleged acts of sabotage or the duty and responsibility of the Attorney General and the Department of Justice under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, prescribing regulations for the conduct and control of alien enemies, except as such duty and responsibility is superseded by the designation of military areas hereunder.

THE WHITE HOUSE,

February 19, 1942.

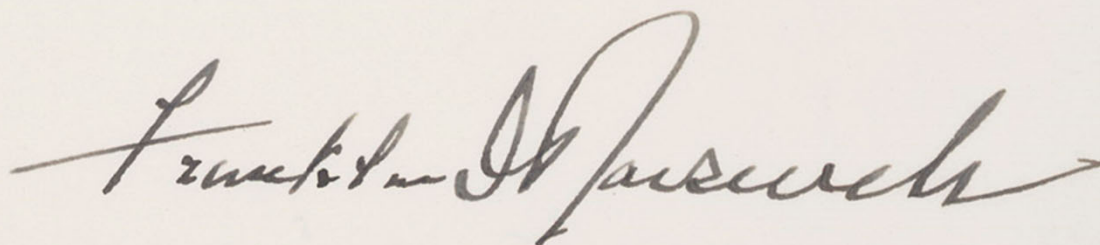


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IN THE DIVISION OF THE
FEDERAL REGISTER

9066

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OUSTER OF ALL JAPS IN CALIFORNIA NEAR!

San Francisco **Examiner** 6 AM EXTRA

IN THE NEWS *Loose Talk Reveals Army, Navy Secrets* MAYOR DENIES MASS REMOVAL FIGHT BY 8500 ALIENS AND INDICTED IN L. A. CITIZENS LIKELY *Thousands of Allies Face Japs in Java* Summary of War On All Fronts

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NOTICE

Headquarters Western Defense Command and Fourth Army

Presidio of San Francisco, California
May 23, 1942

Civilian Exclusion Order No. 92

1. Pursuant to the provisions of Public Proclamations Nos. 1 and 2, this Headquarters, dated March 2, 1942, and March 16, 1942, respectively, it is hereby ordered that from and after 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., of Saturday, May 30, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, be excluded from that portion of Military Area No. 1 described as follows:

All that portion of the Counties of Sacramento and Amador, State of California, within the boundary beginning at a point at which California State Highway No. 16 intersects California State Highway No. 49, approximately two miles south of Plymouth; thence southerly along said Highway No. 49 to the Amador-Calaveras County Line; thence westerly along the Amador-Calaveras County Line to the Amador-San Joaquin County Line; thence northerly along the Amador-San Joaquin County Line to the Sacramento-San Joaquin County Line; thence westerly along the Sacramento-San Joaquin County Line to the easterly line of the right of way of the main line of the Southern Pacific Railroad from Lodi to Sacramento; thence northerly along said easterly line to its crossing with California State Highway No. 16; thence easterly along said Highway No. 16 to point of beginning.

2. A responsible member of each family, and each individual living alone, in the above described area will report between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M., Sunday, May 24, 1942, or during the same hours on Monday, May 25, 1942, to the Civil Control Station located at:

Masonic Hall,
Elk Grove, California.

3. Any person subject to this order who fails to comply with any of its provisions or with the provisions of published instructions pertaining hereto or who is found in the above area after 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., of Saturday, May 30, 1942, will be liable to the criminal penalties provided by Public Law No. 503, 77th Congress, approved March 21, 1942, entitled "An Act to Provide a Penalty for Violation of Restrictions or Orders with Respect to Persons Entering, Remaining in, Leaving or Committing Any Act in Military Areas or Zones," and alien Japanese will be subject to immediate apprehension and internment.

4. All persons within the bounds of an established Assembly Center pursuant to instructions from this Headquarters are excepted from the provisions of this order while those persons are in such Assembly Center.

J. L. DeWITT
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army
Commanding

There were more than 100 exclusion orders, covering all parts of California, Oregon, and Washington...

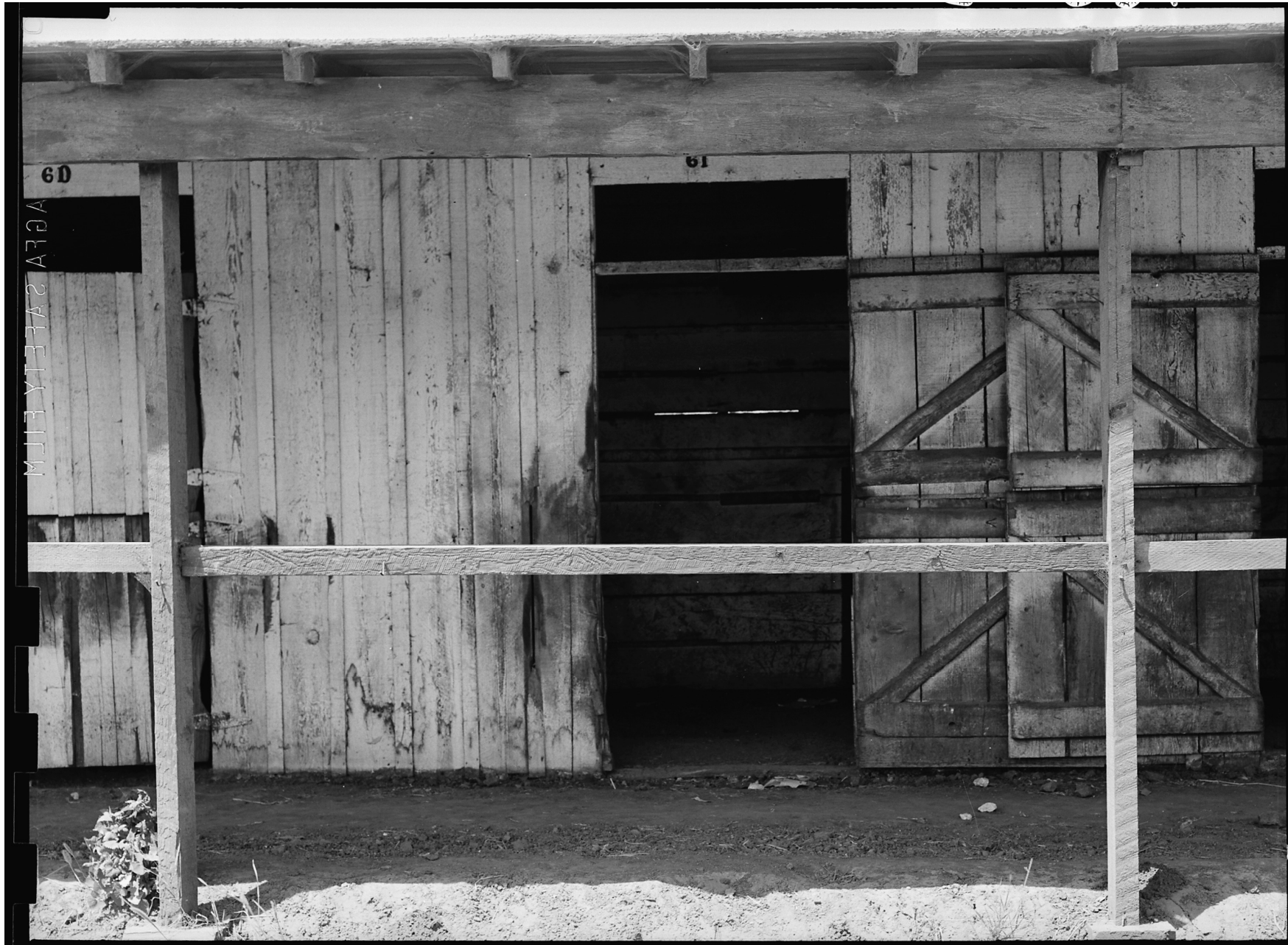
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Nearly 70,000 American citizens—over 110,000 persons in all—were forced to abandon their homes and property, and were forcibly imprisoned behind barbed wire, far from their homes, under armed guard...

Imprisonment in Temporary “Assembly Centers”

The first stop for the new prisoners was one of 15 “Assembly Centers,” mostly converted racetracks and fairgrounds, with abysmal living conditions—thousands were forced to live in converted horse stables!



Horse Stall at former Tanforan Racetrack



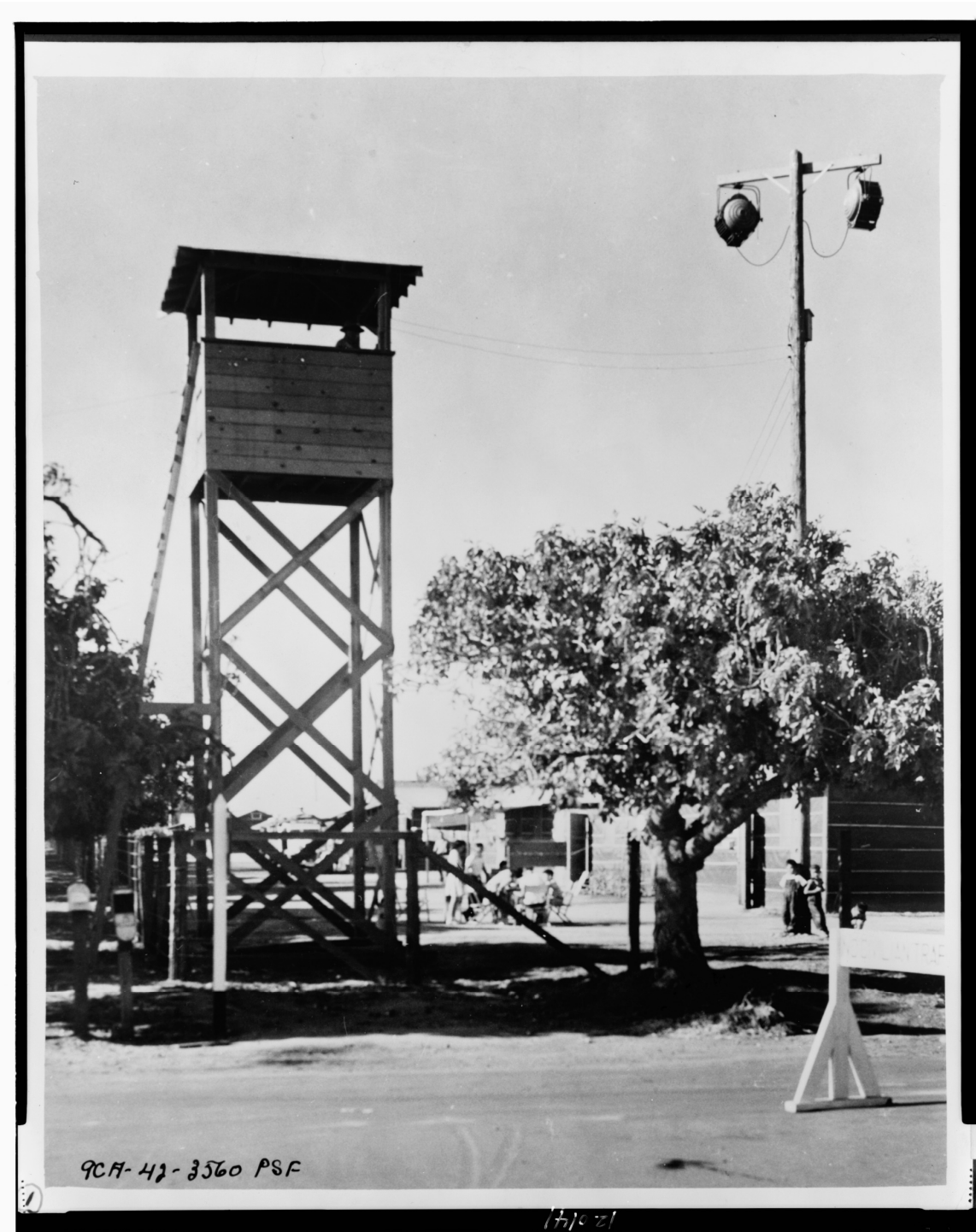
Horse Stalls at former Tanforan Racetrack



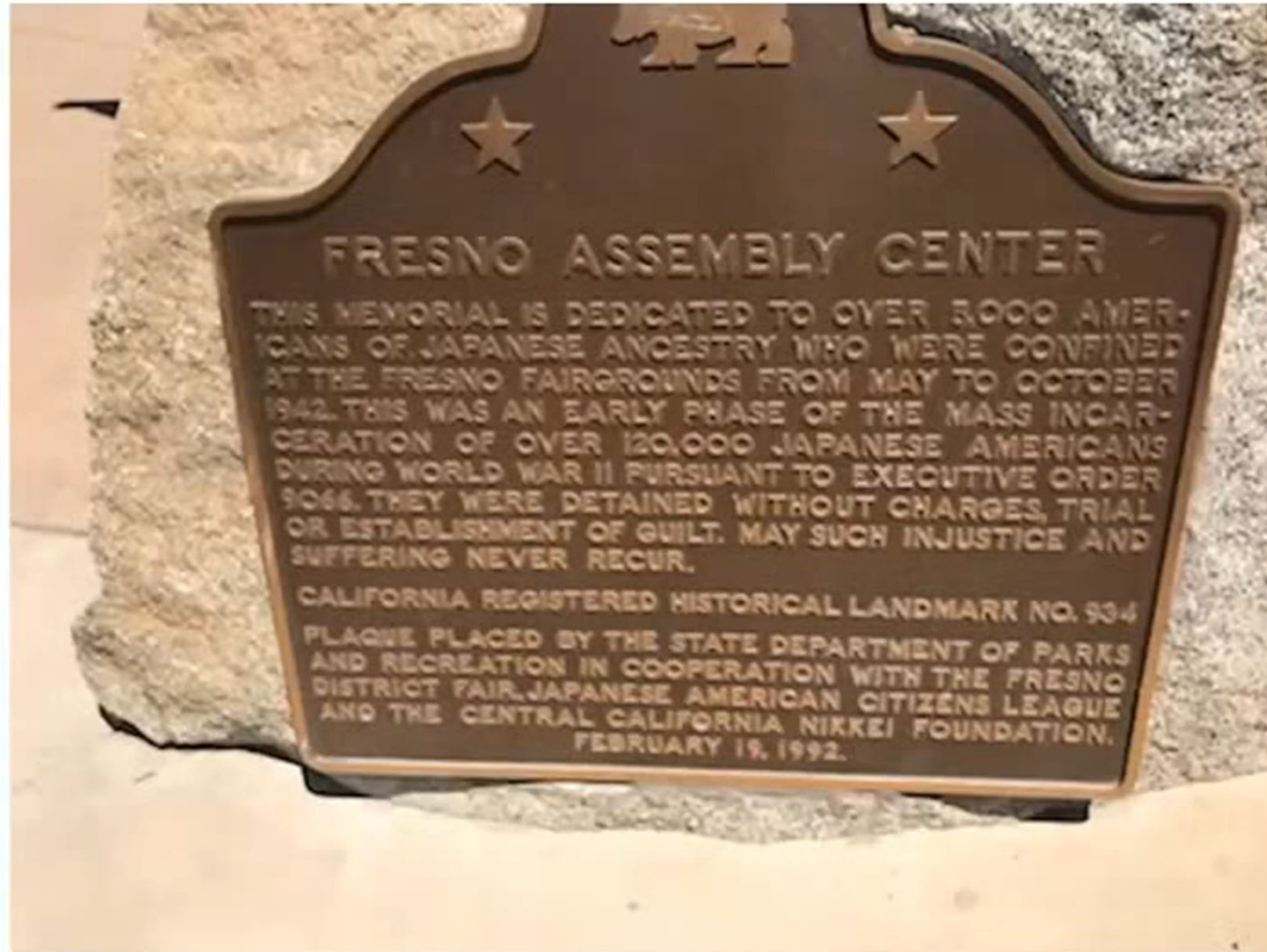
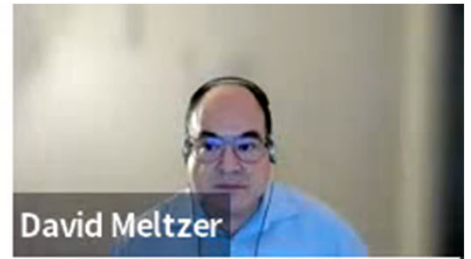
Converted Horse Stalls at Tanforan Assembly Center



Converted Horse Stalls at Tanforan Assembly Center



Guard Tower at Fresno
Assembly Center

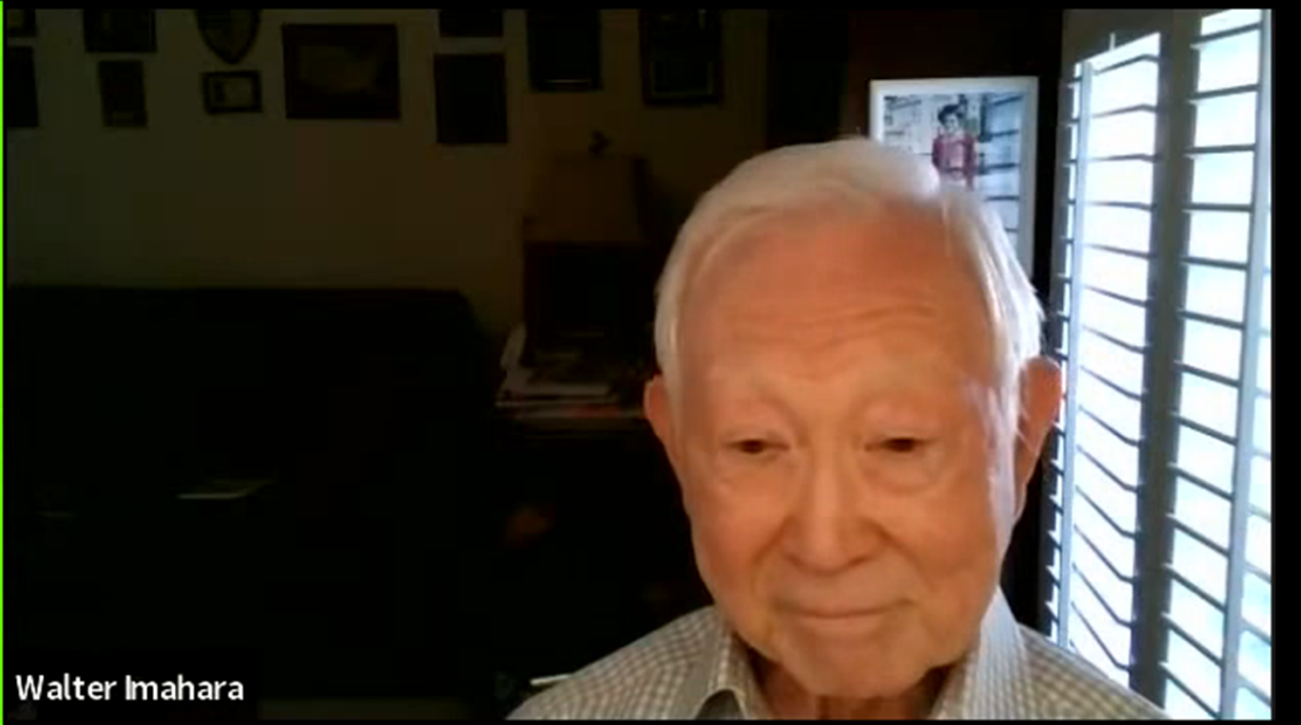


Memorial Plaque at site of Fresno Assembly Center





Heather Zbinden



Walter Imahara



David Meltzer

zoom



Walter Imahar...

Jerome Relocation Center in Denson, Arkansas

zoom



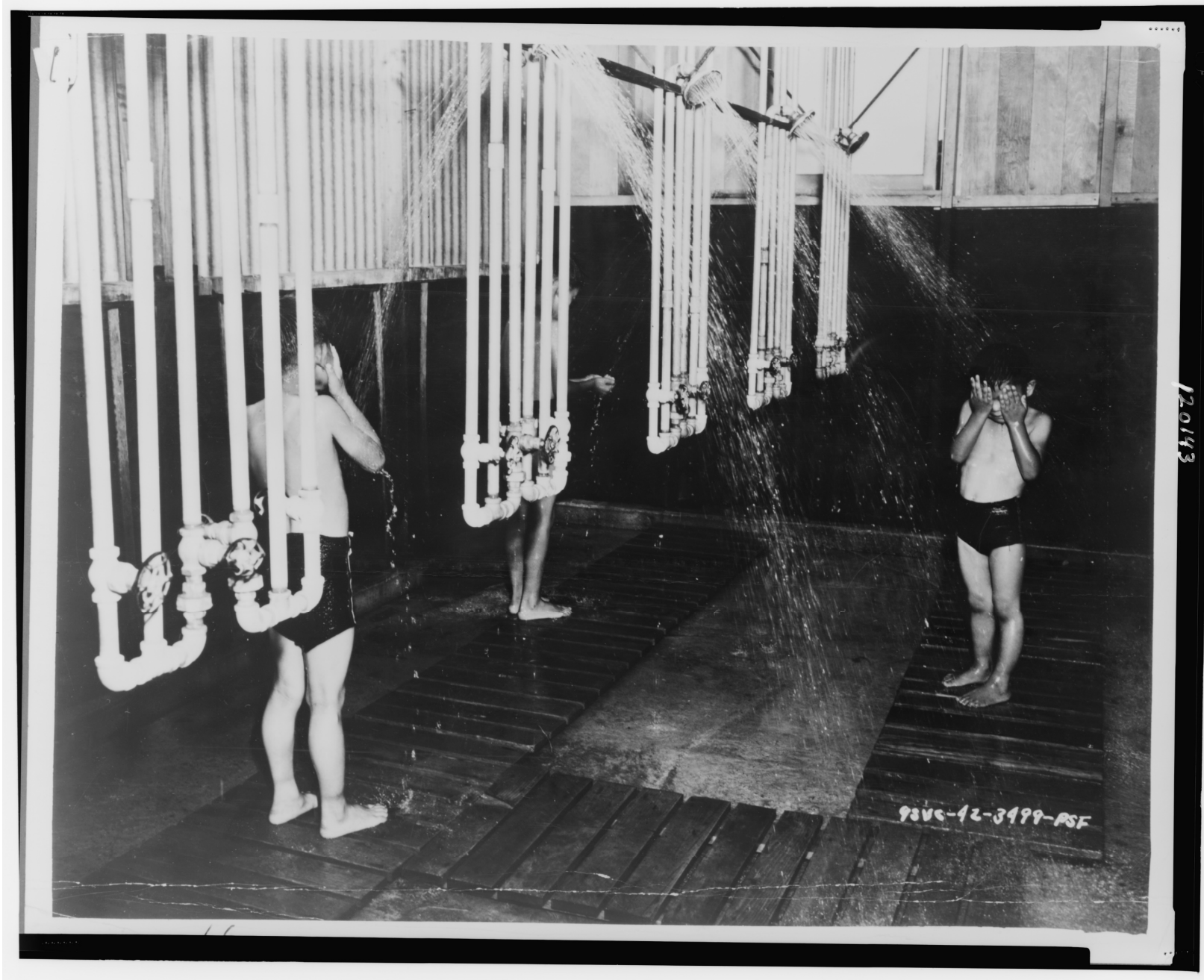
Chopping wood at Jerome Relocation Center, for firewood, furniture, etc.



Drainage ditches with
make-shift bridges at
Rohwer Relocation Center

Standing on a makeshift
bridge across a rain-
filled drainage ditch at
Jerome Relocation
Center





Communal Showers at Fresno Assembly Center



Heather Zbinden

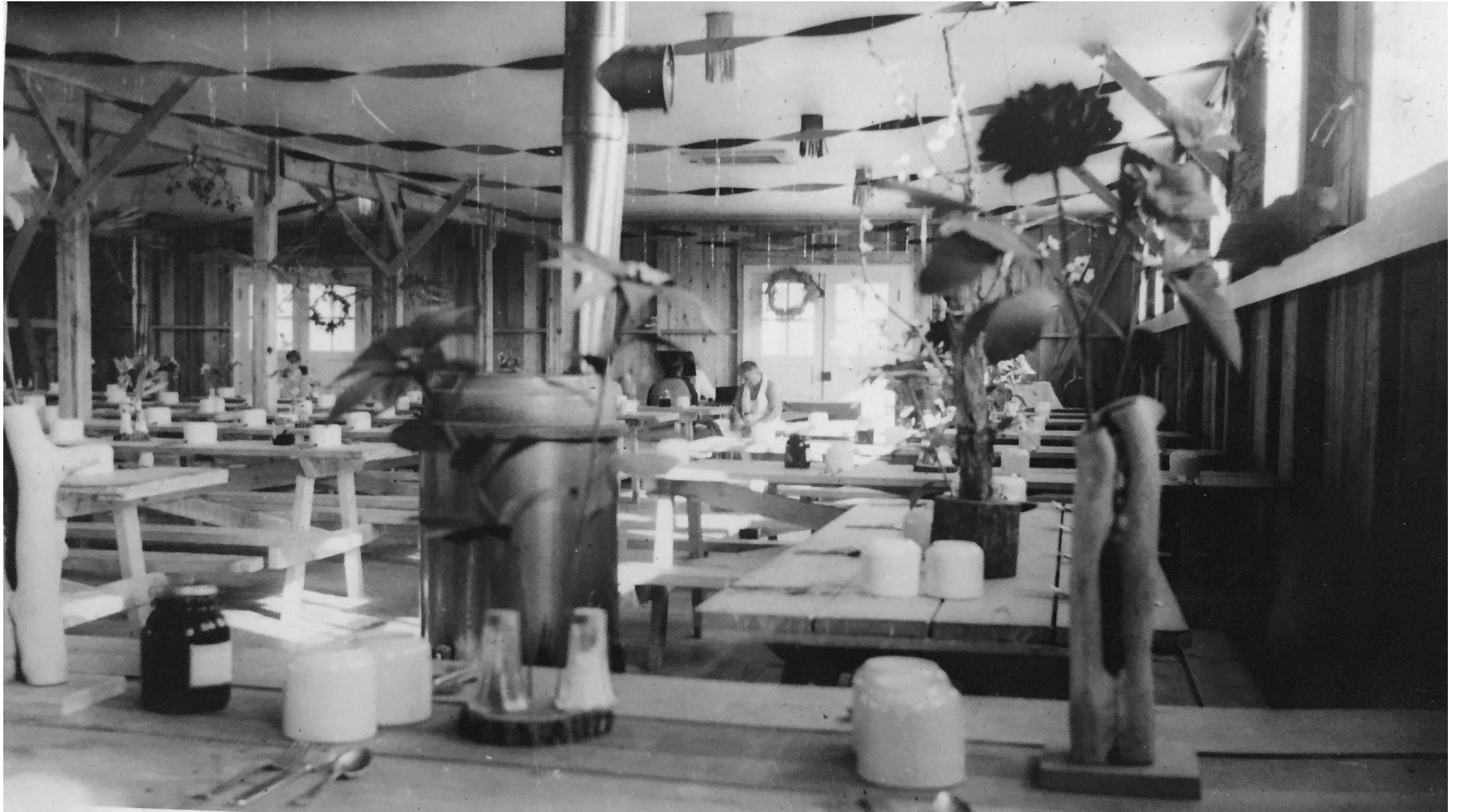


Walter Imahara



David Meltzer

zoom



Communal mess hall at Jerome Relocation Center



Heather Zbinden



Walter Imahara



David Meltzer

zoom



Internee electricians (left), and visiting family member (in uniform), on leave



Internees served as Rohwer police force, under direction of Caucasians



Hospitality Center: Teenage internees hosted visiting Japanese-American soldiers from local Army base

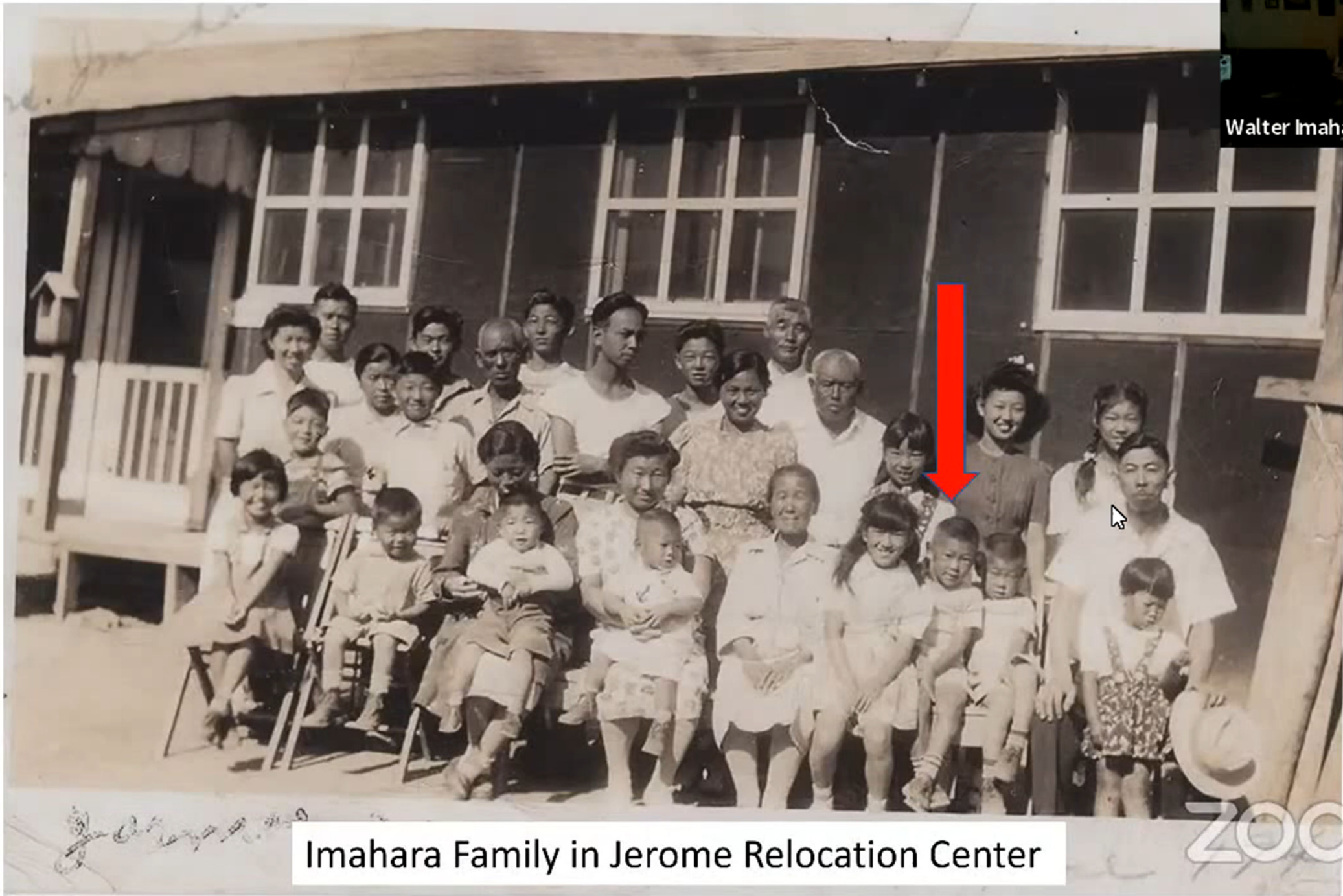


1946

2000



Sister Flora Imahara with embroidery made during internment



Walter Imahar...

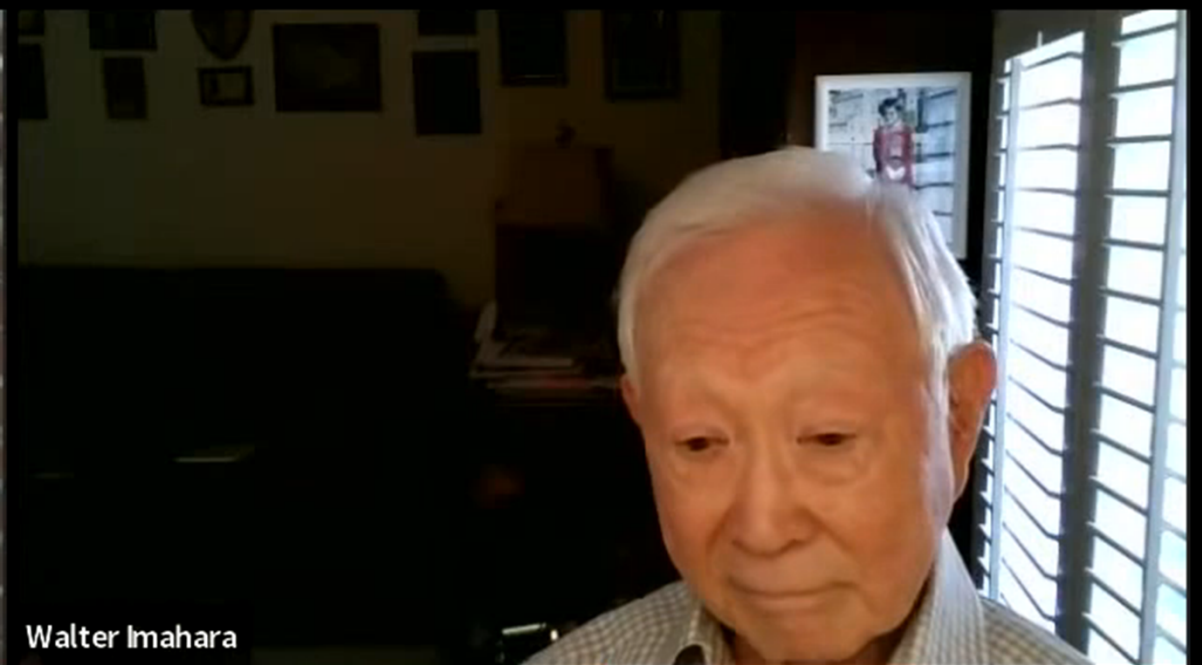
Imahara Family in Jerome Relocation Center

After the War: Camps closed, prisoners released

After the closure of the camps, there was a difficult adjustment period for all of the former internees. Lingering resentment against Japanese Americans made everyone's life difficult for many more years to come.



zoom



zoom



Heather Zbinden



Walter Imahara

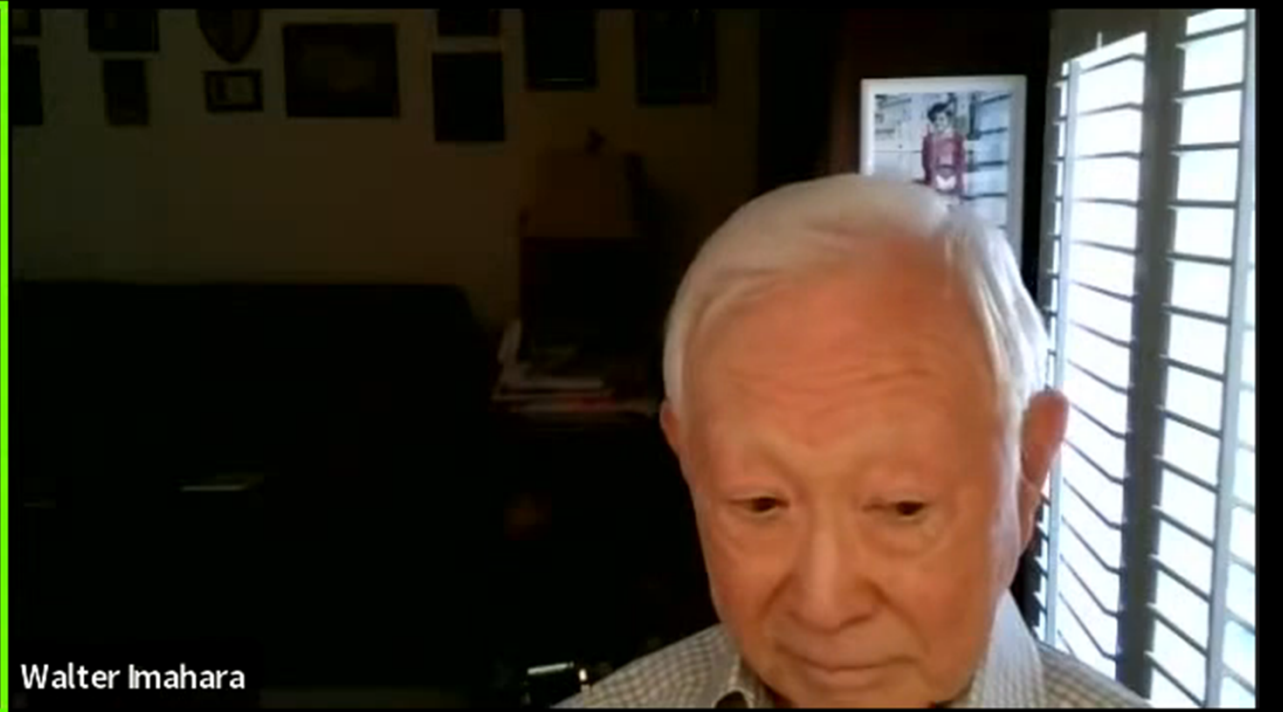


David Meltzer

zoom



Heather Zbinden

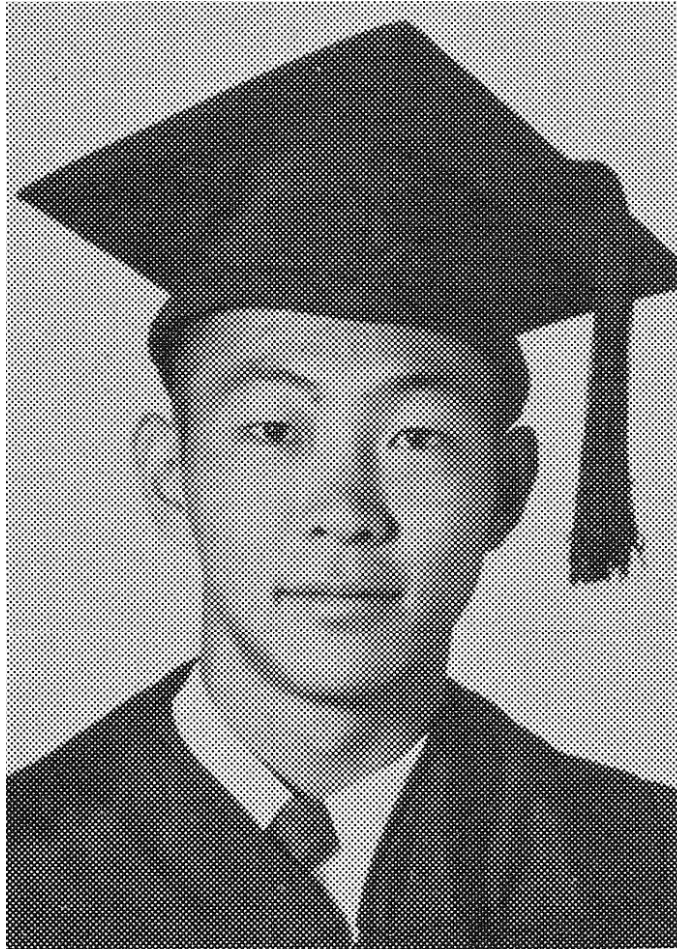


Walter Imahara



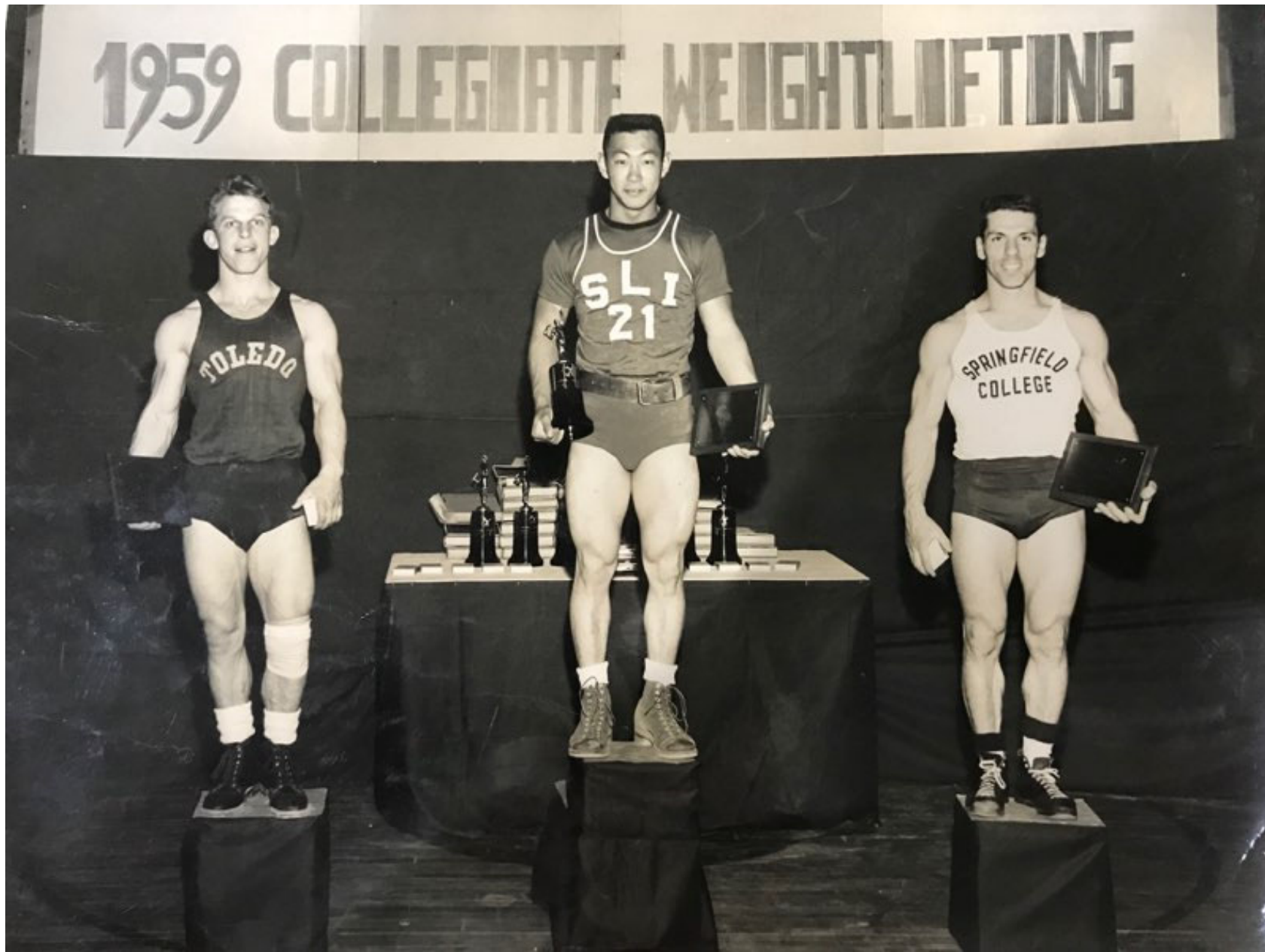
David Meltzer

zoom

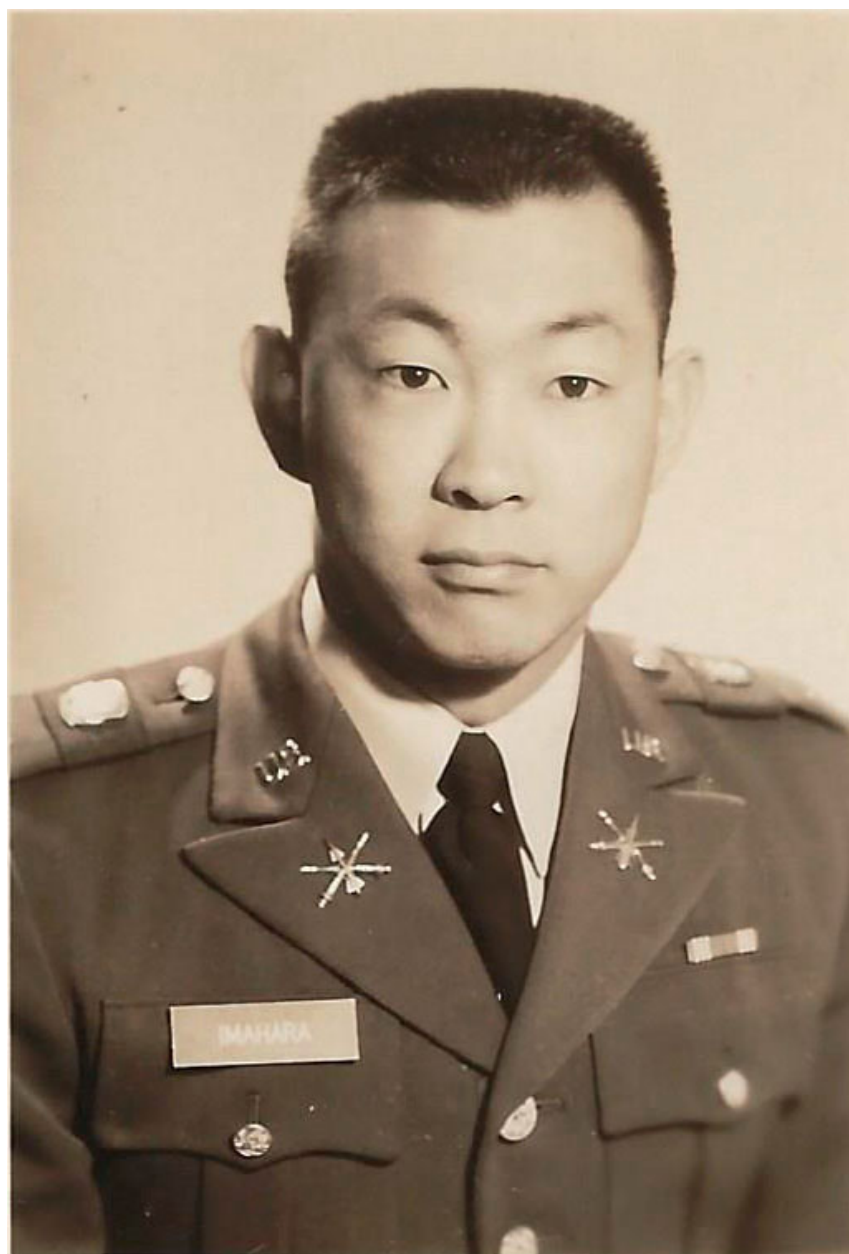


WALTER M. IMAHARA, *Baton Rouge*
Horticulture

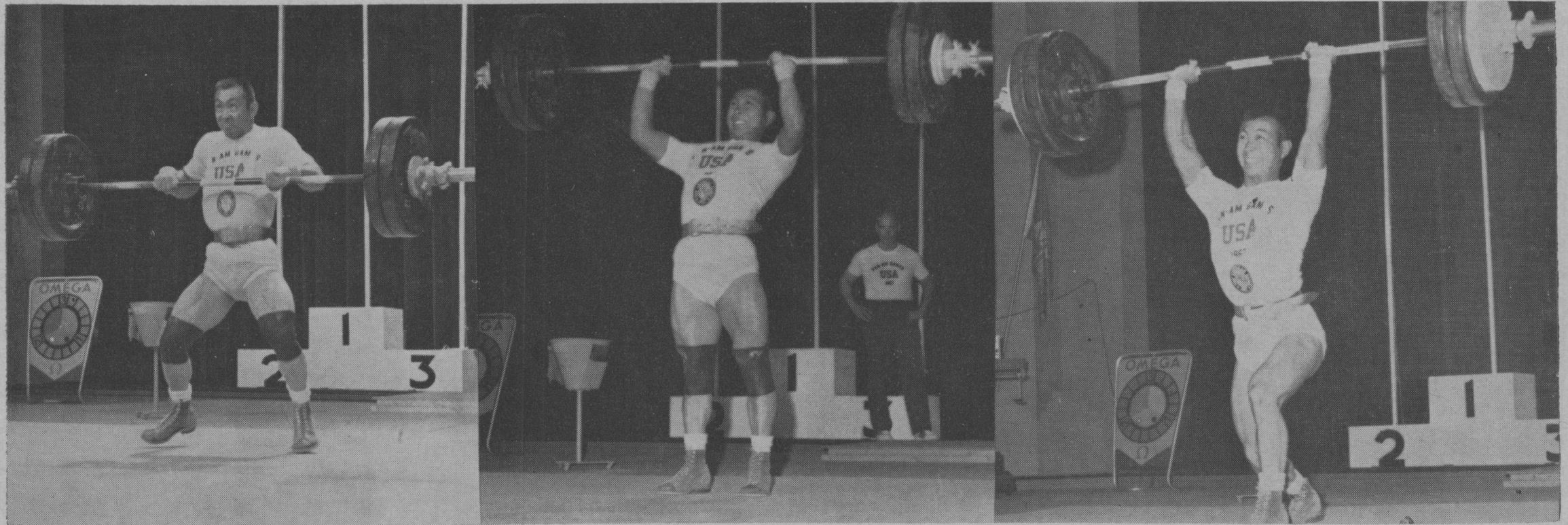
Graduate of Southwestern Louisiana Institute, Lafayette, Louisiana, 1960



1959 National Collegiate Weightlifting Champion



First Lieutenant Walter M. Imahara, U.S. Army



own world record with his third of 270 and finally on a fourth attempt with 272 tried to exceed his world record. He wasn't successful on either his third or fourth but he had shown good style in all attempts with only the last evidencing too much body drive. As might be expected, Baez was lifting all alone when it came to his first attempt. These poundages will

and a jerk press. He had bandaged shins and knees which didn't disguise his kick on the second attempt with 204 or his third with 215, both of which he made. Paulo Batista de Sene of Brazil was the teenager in the class (there were only four in the meet) and while quite well built, was not in the mature class of Phillips and others. He took deep layback for

Imahara was the first American to take a title, and is shown with a pull for his first press, just as he started under the weight. This is a very unusual photo for a critical point in the clean. Then we see him pressing this 236 $\frac{3}{4}$, then with his jerk of 297 $\frac{1}{2}$. Coach Dave Mayor stands in the background to lend encouragement.

Pan-American Champion Weightlifter, 1967



The Imahara family started a garden center and landscaping business in Baton Rouge, Louisiana



President of the National Landscape Association, 1996



World Masters Weightlifting Champion, 1994



Pan American Masters Weightlifting Champion, 1997



New Japanese American garden at Hemingbough in St. Francisville, Louisiana







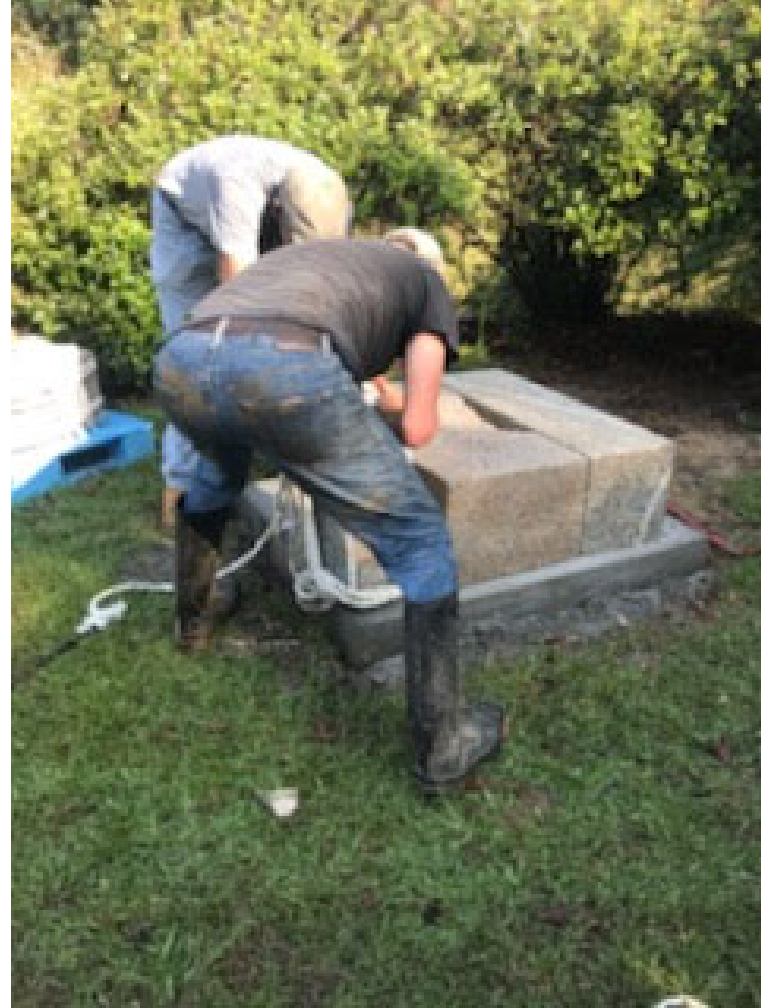








Imahara Family monument in Hiroshima, Japan



Unpacking monument after shipment from Japan to Louisiana



Imahara Family monument in permanent home at Hemingbough in St. Francisville, Louisiana



Imahara Family monument in permanent home at Hemingbough in St. Francisville, Louisiana



Recent visit to site of Jerome camp





Sister Lily Imahara Metz at Rohwer Memorial



Rohwer Cemetery Memorial



Rohwer Memorials





Japanese-American Internment Museum, McGehee, Arkansas



Star Trek Actor George Takei was interned in Rohwer during the War

The Former Internees Campaigned for Redress

For decades after the War, former internees and their families persisted in demanding an apology and compensation from the U.S. government for their unjust imprisonment and loss of property.



The Former Internees Campaigned for Redress

Finally, in 1990, the apology and partial compensation arrived...



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

A monetary sum and words alone cannot restore lost years or erase painful memories; neither can they fully convey our Nation's resolve to rectify injustice and to uphold the rights of individuals. We can never fully right the wrongs of the past. But we can take a clear stand for justice and recognize that serious injustices were done to Japanese Americans during World War II.

In enacting a law calling for restitution and offering a sincere apology, your fellow Americans have, in a very real sense, renewed their traditional commitment to the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice. You and your family have our best wishes for the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Bush".

GEORGE BUSH
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 1990



Recent visit to site of Rohwer camp

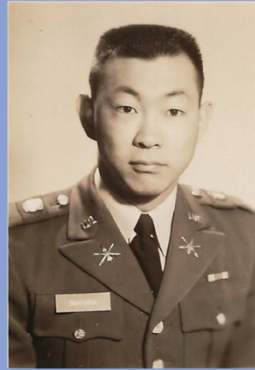




James Imahara—Walter's father—reads the letter of apology from Pres. Bush

I Am An American: Japanese American, Asian Cajun

Walter M. Imahara
and
Diane Koos Gentry



Walter M. Imahara was born in Florin, California in 1937. He is the founding owner of Imahara's Nursery and Landscape Company in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and served as President of the National Landscape Association, the Southern Nursery Association, and the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen. His is also a six-time U.S. Senior National Weightlifting Champion and world-record holder in Masters weightlifting, and was a gold medalist at the 1967 Pan American Games. He served as Chairman of both the USA Masters Weightlifting Federation, and the International Weightlifting Federation Masters Committee. He and his wife Sumi reside in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

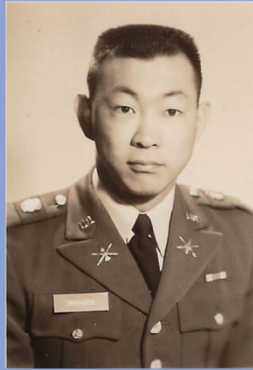
Diane Koos Gentry was born in Wisconsin during WW II; she is a writer and photojournalist. She is the author of Family Dreams: Journey of the Sansei, Enduring Women, and Where Our Draft Heritage Lives On.

In this engrossing story covering over 100 years of his family's history, Walter Imahara describes the long and difficult road to success traveled by a Japanese-American family in the 20th century. After long years of intense labor to build a prosperous family farm, Walter's father lost everything when the family was all forced into wartime relocation camps in 1942. Moving to Louisiana after the war they began from scratch, laboring for others and slowly building a stake, and seeing to it that all nine children eventually graduated from college or professional school. After Walter returned from military service as an Army officer, he launched the new family business, a nursery and landscape company that became one of the largest and best-known in Baton Rouge. Widely known as a hard-driving and goal-oriented executive, Walter was elected to the presidency of several regional and national nursery and landscape professional organizations. Meanwhile, he had become one of the best weightlifters in the U.S. and the world, a six-time U.S. champion and gold medalist at the Pan American Games. After a second career as Chairman of the International Weightlifting Federation Masters Committee, he retired to work on his life-long dream of creating botanical gardens to leave as a legacy to his family and to the people of Louisiana.



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Available at [Lulu.com](https://www.lulu.com)

WALTER IMAHARA

The Life and Times of a Japanese
American Champion



Walter M. Imahara

WALTER IMAHARA

The Life and Times of a Japanese
American Champion



Walter M. Imahara

Available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Summary, and Lessons Learned

In 2022, it may be hard to believe that almost 100,000 American citizens were once rounded up and imprisoned with no suspicion of having committed any crimes, purely based on their ethnic background—and that many lost nearly all their property and possessions.

Summary, and Lessons Learned

But it did happen, and drew wide support at the time.

Could it happen again?

And if so, to whom?



