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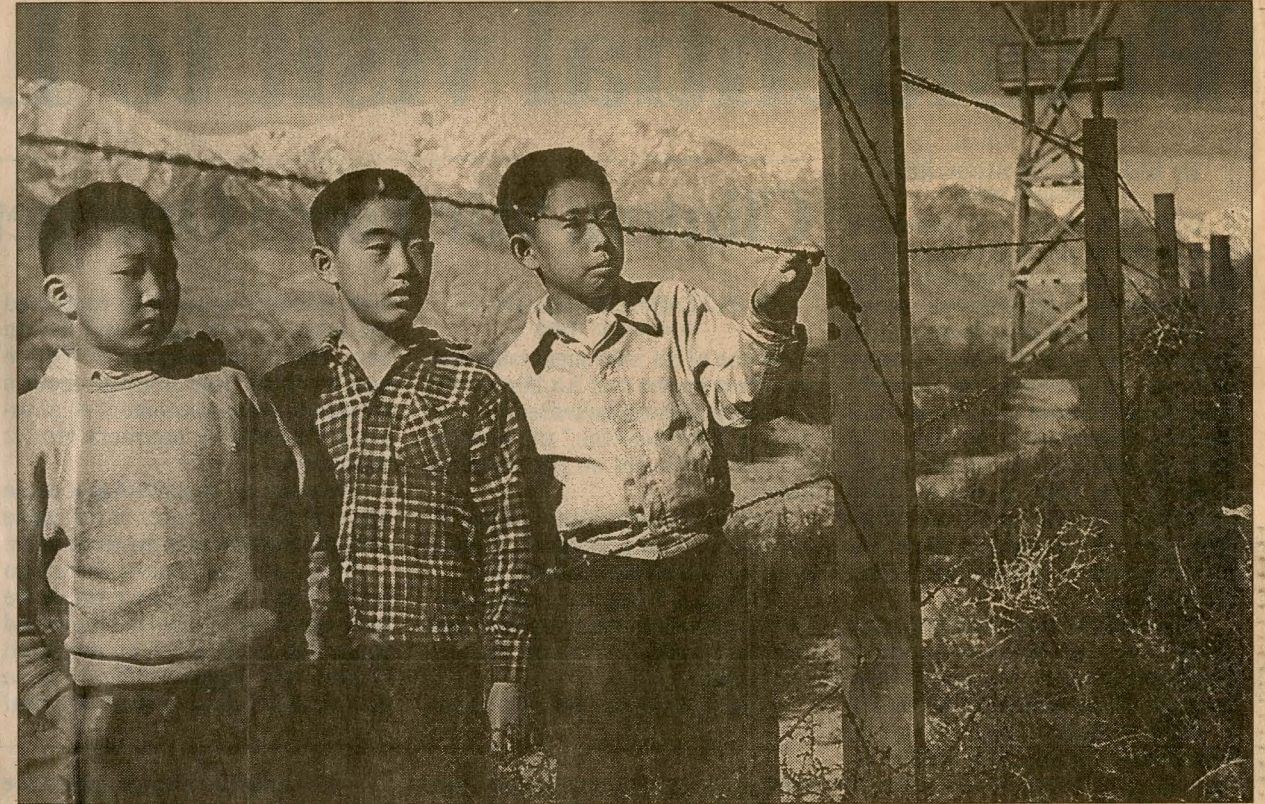
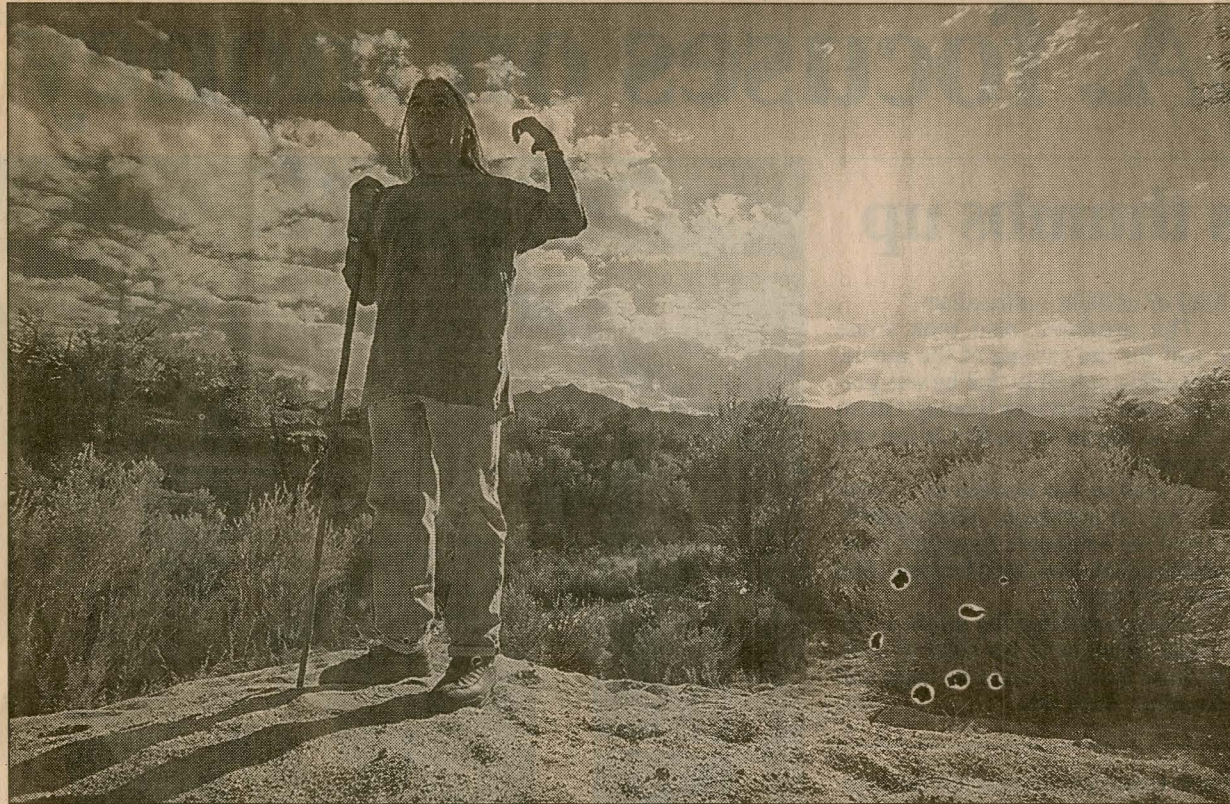
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Keeping alive the bitter history of Manzanar

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Keeping alive the bitter history of Manzanar

WWII Japanese-American internment camp starts tour

By MICHAEL FLEEMAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDEPENDENCE — Equipped with water, apples and a cellular phone, Richard Stewart starts work today as the lone tour guide in a lonely place: Manzanar, the World War II internment camp for Japanese-Americans.

The first-ever daily tours are seen as a modest sign of progress in the long, thorny campaign to create a full-service national park to mark a desolate place and shameful era few Americans remember and most would rather forget.

"It's something," says 73-year-old Sue Kunitomi Embrey, who was interned at the camp at age 18 and now lives in Los Angeles. "At least somebody will be there and do something so people won't come there and find nothing there, except an empty lot and rusted cans."

This marks the first summer the National Park Service has complete control of the 800-acre Manzanar National Historic Site, where a nervous nation put 10,000 people of Japanese ancestry behind barbed wire after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

But the federal role remains limited. Stewart's tours are being financed by a \$3,500 grant from the Eastern California Museum here, with no money from the Park Service.

Stewart, 53, a Paiute Indian and elementary school teacher who developed an interest in Japanese culture while studying Japanese pottery,

"It's something. At least somebody will be there and do something so people won't come there and find nothing there, except an empty lot and rusted cans."

— Sue Kunitomi Embrey,
interned at age 18

will lead one-hour, 45-minute walking tours.

His itinerary includes a look at the site's early Indian residents, the Indians' displacement by white farmers, the farmers' displacement by the water wars with Los Angeles, and the internment of the Japanese-Americans from 1942 to 1945.

Manzanar is located about 220 miles north of Los Angeles in the shadow of Mount Whitney on the rugged eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada.

A dirt driveway leads from Highway 395 to the camp, which is identified only by small markers.

For Stewart, the conditions will be primitive: He'll be stationed in the old stone sentry building at the entrance to Manzanar. It has no electricity, no running water, not even



THE MANZANAR camp, located near Independence, was one of 10 internment sites for Japanese-Americans during WWII, and is part of an era some Americans would rather forget.

portable restrooms. Temperatures soar past 100 this time of year, and the wind is notoriously punishing.

Stewart isn't concerned, though.

"The climate isn't something that I have a problem with, because I live here," says Stewart, who will give tours five days a week over the summer, then try to do them on week-

ends when school resumes in the fall.

The key part of his tour is the poignant and difficult history of the internment camp.

Visitors will see the foundation of a barracks, the remnants of ornamental rock gardens, the stone sentry buildings and the last remaining major structure, the wood-frame au-

ditorium.

It is a history, many say, that has made the government slow to get involved in Manzanar. The camp was one of 10 that held a total of 120,000 people, about two-thirds of them American citizens.

Manzanar was designated to represent all the camps because it was

the best preserved.

A small group of local residents, chiefly World War II veterans, continues to object to developing the site. They call it un-American.

Park Service supervisor Ross Hopkins, an outspoken advocate for the historic site, keeps an unlisted number because of the threatening calls he still receives.

Despite the local opposition, Hopkins says the fate of Manzanar is shaped more by Park Service budget constraints.

"Manzanar seems to be a very small pea in an awfully large dinner," he says.

"I think it's pretty pathetic, if you want my honest opinion," he adds. "But the tours are a real tribute to the Eastern California Museum. Private citizens are taking their own time and energy to do something that really the federal government should be doing."

The Park Service formally took title of the site April 26, the day of the internees' annual pilgrimage, from its previous owner, the city of Los Angeles, which acquired the land in the 1920s for the water rights.

The turnover capped years of negotiations between the city and the federal government, which had designated Manzanar a historic site in 1992 even though it didn't own the property.

Supporters now hope the organized tours will shake a few more dollars out of Congress, which is considering a \$310,000 appropriations measure to build a fence to keep out off-road vehicles, vandals and grazing cattle.

"It is encouraging," Embrey says. "You're happy when they do even one little bit. You hope for something bigger, but at least you're getting started."