

MANZANAR COMMITTEE  
CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Manzanar Committee formed in January, 1970 after December 1969 pilgrimage for 2 purposes: educational and to make an application to the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation to name Manzanar as a historical landmark.

Application prepared and submitted in November 1971 by Warren Furutani, then chairperson of Manzanar Project Committee and at that time National JACL Coordinator for Community Involvement. Sponsoring organizations listed were JACL, Manzanar Committee; Dept. of Water and Power of Los Angeles, consenting owner.

Manzanar was approved as historical landmark in January 1972 at a meeting of the Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee in San Francisco.

Pilgrimage to Manzanar was conducted in March 1972 despite a delay in the final approval of the wording of the plaque. The State refused to approve pending the following reasons: the original wording was too long - 60 words maximum was requested.

The Manzanar Committee had cut down the wording and submitted a revised version before March 1972 but this was not approved by the Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee.

At the October 28, 1972 meeting of the Advisory Committee, the wording of the Manzanar Committee was rejected in total; the Committee was not advised of the decision except by way of a UPI report out of Truckee, California carried on Oct. 30th. The main objection was to the words "concentration camps." Nothing else was mentioned.

A letter was received by our Committee and the JACL dated November 22, 1972 from John H. Michael, Executive Secretary of the Advisory Committee with a proposed text as approved by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

On Nov. 4th, the Manzanar Committee sent out a news release in which the Committee spokesmen accused the State people of negotiating in bad faith and "with an insensitivity that smacks of the racism which put us in the camps thirty years ago. . . ."

The Manzanar Committee refused to correspond with the State people from the time they received the letter from Mr. Michael until some time in January 1973 during which time they solicited letters of support from community and individuals.

The third week of January, Sue Embrey received a phone call from Jim Murakami, V.P. of JACL, who had been the liaison between the State and the Manzanar Committee, who was asked by Mr. Michael what the Manzanar Committee was going to do about the proposed wording as suggested by the State.



Sue Embrey told Murakami that the Committee was not going to do anything about the State's wording and they refuse to accept it. They also were standing pat on their own revised 60-word limit wording which they had presented to the State in 1971.

Jim asked members of the Manzanar Committee to meet with the State people in order to have a face-to-face meeting and try to work out a wording which would be acceptable to all concerned. We advised him that if the State people were going to scream and insult the members as they had previously, then there was no reason to spend the air fare to fly to Sacramento, but that if there was any possibility that the State would listen to the Committee members, we would consider sending representatives. The Manzanar Committee requested that Sue Embrey and Amy Ishii fly to Sacramento as a "last-ditch" effort in order that the community supporting us would know that we had not refused to confront the State.

On Feb. 4th, Amy Ishii and Sue Embrey flew to Sacramento and met with Jim Murakami, JACL v.p., John H. Michael, Exec. Secretary of the Advisory Committee, Mrs. Kaiser, Chairperson of the Advisory Committee and Dan Tucker, historian with the Dept. of Parks and Recreation. At that meeting, a reasonably objective discussion was held and the wording was agreed upon pending the approval of the Manzanar Committee members.

On Feb. 6th, Sunday, an emergency meeting of the Manzanar Committee was held at which time the members revised the third paragraph of the text and requested that the State approve their version of the text.

Since Mr. Michael and Mrs. Kaiser had no objection to the use of the term "concentration camp" or the words, "racism" and "greed" in the text, the Manzanar Committee accepted the State's wording in the first paragraph, "As a result of the hysteria . . ." which the Manzanar Committee has never been fully accepting of.

The final wording is attached. A confirming letter and several phone calls were made at which time the wording was accepted by Mr. Tucker and Mr. Michael and we thought the full backing of Mr. Penn Mott, Director of the Dept. of Parks and Recreation.

We received a phone call on Thursday, Feb. 15th from Jim Murakami that Mr. Penn Mott refused to accept the final text because of the words "racism" and "greed" in the third paragraph. Jim also advised us that both Mr. Michael and Mrs. Kaiser were quite upset with Penn Mott for his refusal.

Jim Murakami made an appointment with Mr. Penn Mott for Tuesday, Feb. 20th to confront him and to get directly from Mr. Penn Mott his refusal.

Penn Mott said he had no documentation as to the facts that racism and greed were involved in the evacuation of the Japanese from the West Coast and that unless a "disclaimer" could be put on the plaque, the State absolutely could not use the text as it was approved at the Feb. 4th meeting and later phone calls and revisions.

Mr. Penn Mott wants to know where we have the information that racism and greed were involved. This is the information which we will have to furnish him, he says.



The Manzanar Committee felt that since the State had made several exceptions to historical landmarks regulations, i.e., the site was declared historical in spite of the fact that "it is within the memory of living man", the wording on the final approved text is longer than 60 words, and the third paragraph is an editorializing which is usually not done on State plaques, they would accept the wording.

Jim Murakami's feeling is that there are some people behind Penn Mott who are pressuring him not to accept the wording as approved by his own Advisory Committee and the Manzanar Committee.

Bob Moretti in Sacramento, who has a feasibility study being made regarding Manzanar as a State park, is working on it since Jim Murakami advised him of what happened during the past few days. Hopefully, we can contact other legislators in Sacramento to put pressure on Penn Mott to change his mind.

The Manzanar Committee has over 300 signatures on petitions and close to 40 letters supporting the Committee's stand on their version. The campaign is over, but we may have to re-open it again. As far as the Manzanar Committee is concerned, we are back to our revised 60-word version and we are starting from there.

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