

DEAR FRED,

I hope this finds you well. This year is the 75th Anniversary of the Presidential Executive Order 9066, that sent 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry to America's concentration camps; in 1942. To commemorate this occasion, we dedicated this newsletter to the memory of the

Talforan Assembly Center. On page 5 I wrote an article about you taken from our meeting and an interview that I found on the internet that you gave in 2001. I hope that you like the article, it was very meaningful for me to write it. of this anniversary means anything, its to ensure that this never happens again to anyone... ever again. Thank you for your friendship and humanity 75 years ago and today. I will never forget you. gratefully yours, PAUL OSAKI

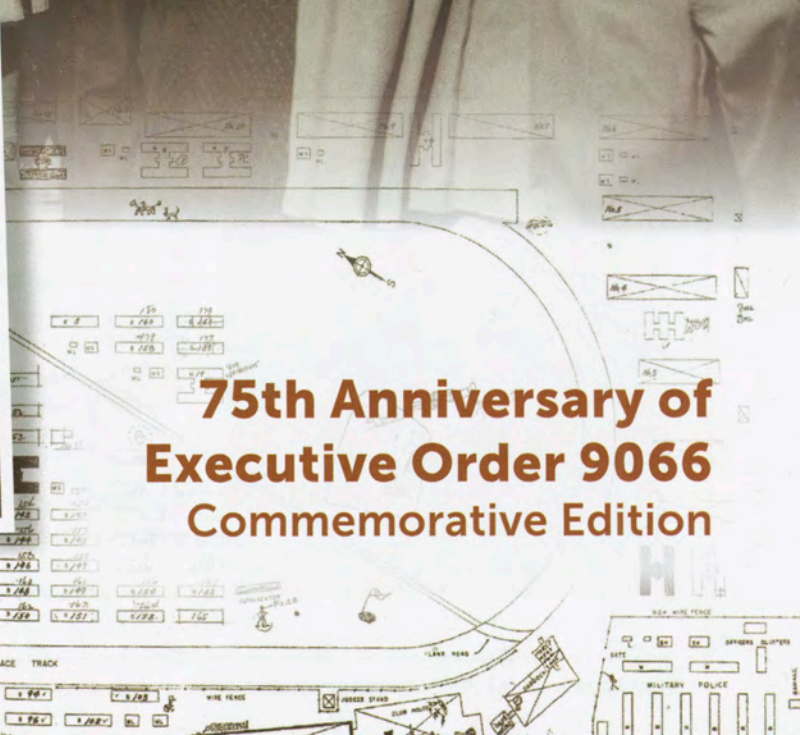
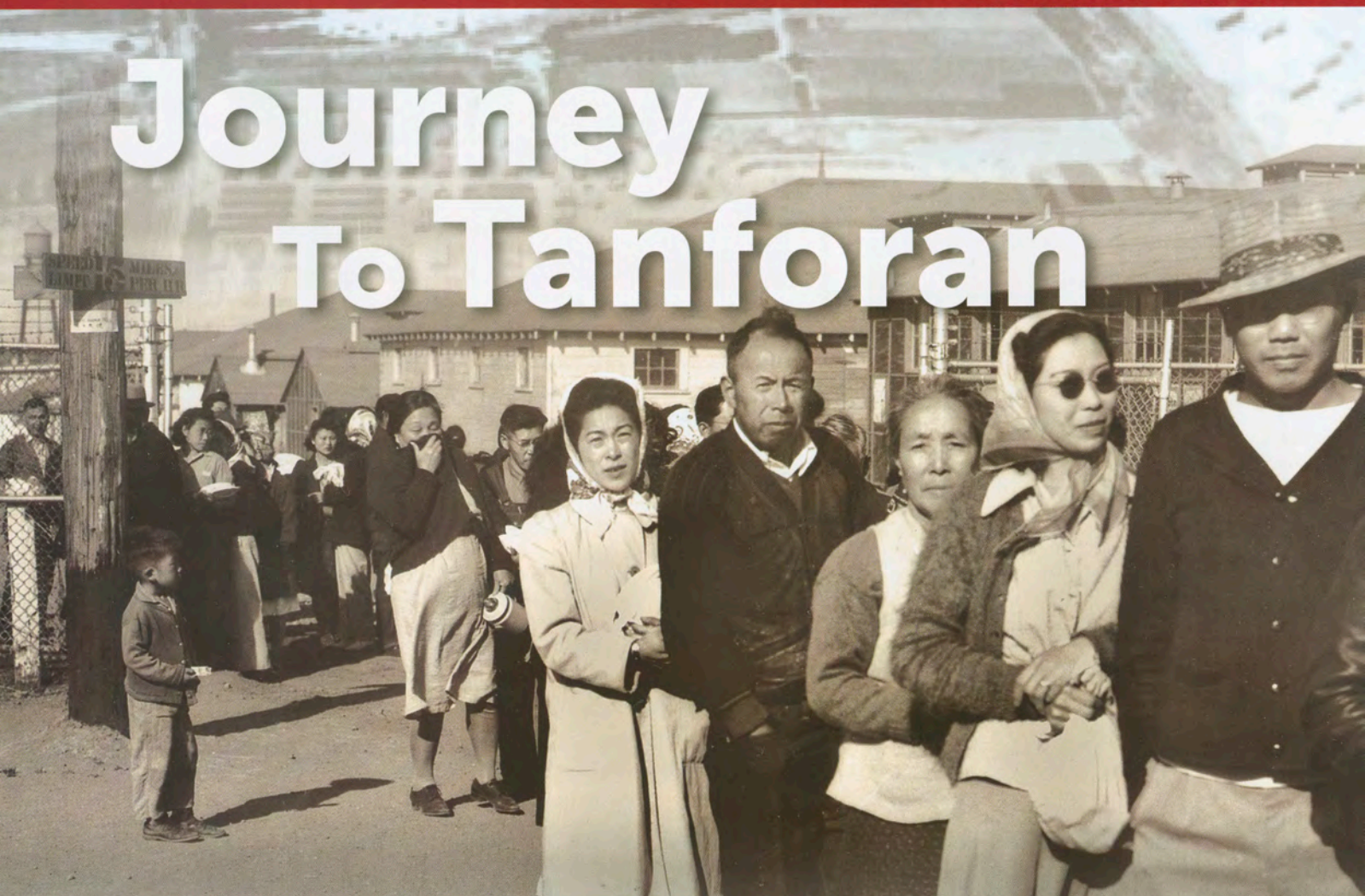


Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California

CENTER

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Journey To Tanforan



**75th Anniversary of
Executive Order 9066
Commemorative Edition**

The Story of Fred Nicholas

The military guard who tore down Tanforan

In 1941, Fred Nicholas was drafted into the U.S. Army; he was assigned as an armed guard at the Tanforan Assembly Center and later rose to the rank of Captain, earning a Bronze Star and Purple Heart. He would go on to become a lawyer and founded Public Counsel, the largest pro-bono law organization in the world helping the poor and needy. He later started a real estate business building shopping centers throughout America including the Eastridge Shopping Center in San Jose, the Supermall of the Great Northwest. He also developed the Ronald Regan Building in Washington D.C., and the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. One of the first shopping malls he built started with tearing down the former Tanforan Assembly Center.

(The following is an interview excerpt with Fred Nicholas in 2001)

I was assigned to military police up in the San Francisco area, and the first assignment I had, I was a private, and I remember being part of the squad that went from house to house in the Japanese community and delivered orders for them to vacate their houses. Later, I was part of a detail which helped them leave, helped them get their stuff out and guided them and drove a guard truck to the ... relocation depot." He spent three or four months at Tanforan — the camp only operated for a little over five months. During that time he "walked perimeter" in uniform and helmet — "an assigned post, with a rifle which was loaded" four hours on, four hours off. "I had two tours a day, and then was reassigned to other duties and then back." With the other soldiers he camped in tents at the racetrack.

"I remember I was up on one of the guard towers with the lights, and it looked like a prison... I was 21 years old. I had just come from senior year at USC in journalism, and I was very, very upset about it."

"I became friendly with various of the Japanese who were interned there. They used to give me notes or they used to sit by the fence where I was guarding." He said he ran errands, bought clothing and food for people that they couldn't get in the camp. "It was a very traumatic experience for me. It was very difficult for the people behind the fence and it was very difficult for some of the guards. I'm not saying all of them, but some of them, like me..."

"Most of the people that I talked to were young, mostly young men and girls who had come out of Berkeley, taken out of school, or other schools in the neighborhood, and so we used to talk. I became friendly with one of the girls behind the fence, and I corresponded with her for many years during the time I was in the Army. I met her after I got out of the Army and became a lawyer, and so I had this correspondence relationship with this young girl who was from Berkeley, who was about my age, and

I learned all about her plight, her difficulties and her family. It was a sad duty for me. But it was also interesting and rewarding, because I did make friends, not of the soldiers but of the people being guarded."

"...I mean, I would be on duty at three or four o'clock in the morning and there would be people out there talking to me... We'd talk about everything — politics, religion, the state of the world. I asked, what about changing the situation? Was it possible to change the situation? No, it was not possible."

In 1975, a few years after the Tanforan Shopping Center opened Fred put up a plaque, which mentioned the Tanforan Assembly Center. This was unusually early for an internment commemoration. Most of the internment signage and plaques didn't go up until the redress movement in the 1980's. But Nicholas never forgot. He knew the Tanforan story from personal experience. He was there in 1942 as a reluctant Army draftee assigned to military police guard duty at the camp. He took the time to get to know and befriend the enemy when most would not.

A former internee once said, "Fred was chastised for talking to me. He didn't tell you that, but he was chastised for talking to the inmates." □

