

# Leaving home again

## Japanese-Americans recreate WWII evacuation, internment

*Japanese American Community*

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REGISTER-PAJARONIAN STAFF

They were lined up for blocks, their personal possessions stuffed into suitcases and boxes. They were taking only what they could carry. Children were forced to leave behind pets and toys. Families lost homes, farms and businesses.

American citizens and their parents were forced to abandon their communities and board busses for temporary holding camps. From there, they didn't know where they were going.

That was April 27, 1942.

That fear and uncertainty was relived Saturday in downtown Watsonville with the first ever re-enactment of the day more than 1,000 Japanese and Japanese-Americans from the Pajaro Valley were rounded up and taken to the Salinas Rodeo Grounds before being moved to their more permanent camp in Poston, Ariz.

Dorothy Hamai was a 19-year-old Hartnell College student when Executive Order 9066, which gave the military the right to remove enemy aliens from the West Coast, was issued. The order to all Japanese to pack up their belongings and register for transport to the Rodeo Grounds came just days before the move was supposed to take place.

"We all just had one suitcase," Hamai said. "We just left everything behind."

Hamai, her husband, mother-in-law and sister-in-law were sent to Poston, but not long after arriving, her husband was drafted into the military and went to fight in Belgium. Her daughter was born in Poston.

"When I found out about the re-enactment, I was sad," she said. "I just hope it doesn't happen to anyone else."

Sixty years to the day the evacuation began, people from all over the country gathered to remember the injustice that was done and the people that stood up to support the Japanese-Americans.

"Imagine that while all of this was happening with all this fear, that there were people in this town who stood up and spoke in defense of their neighbors and friends," said Sandy Lydon, a historian at Cabrillo College and the emcee for the event. "That's what we'd like to think we are replicating here today — people who had the courage to stand up in the face of negative media and public opinion and say this isn't right, we have a Constitution and this isn't right."

Lydon said that more than 70 percent of the people taken from their homes in the Pajaro Valley were U.S. citizens. In all, nearly 120,000 Japanese and Japanese-Americans were interned.

"It brought back a lot of memories," said Shig Kizuka, a Watsonville resident who had to leave his senior year of high school at Watsonville High because of the internment. He and others from his class had a graduation ceremony at the Rodeo Grounds, but did not have a proper graduation from Watsonville High until 1992. "It was very emotional."

Outside the Veteran's Memorial Hall actors lined up to be given their name tags and then were loaded on a Greyhound bus, just as it happened 60 years ago. This time, instead of being taken to the Salinas Rodeo Grounds, they were taken to the Mello Center on East

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Jaclyn D'Arcy watches Watsonville disappear from view as she is bused away on East Beach Street during the "Liberty Lost ... Lessons in Loyalty" re-enactment put on Saturday in Watsonville.

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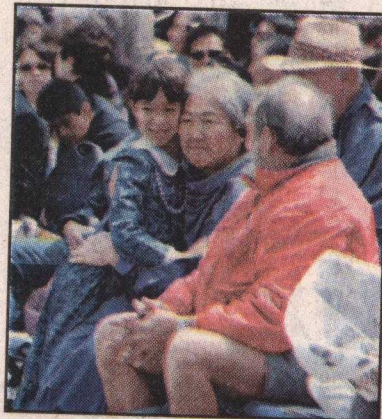
Zane Ota and others act out the role of a Watsonville family being evacuated in front of the Veteran's Memorial Building on East Beach Street Saturday. The scene was part of the re-enactment of the April 27, 1942 internment of Japanese and Japanese-American citizens by the U.S. Government.



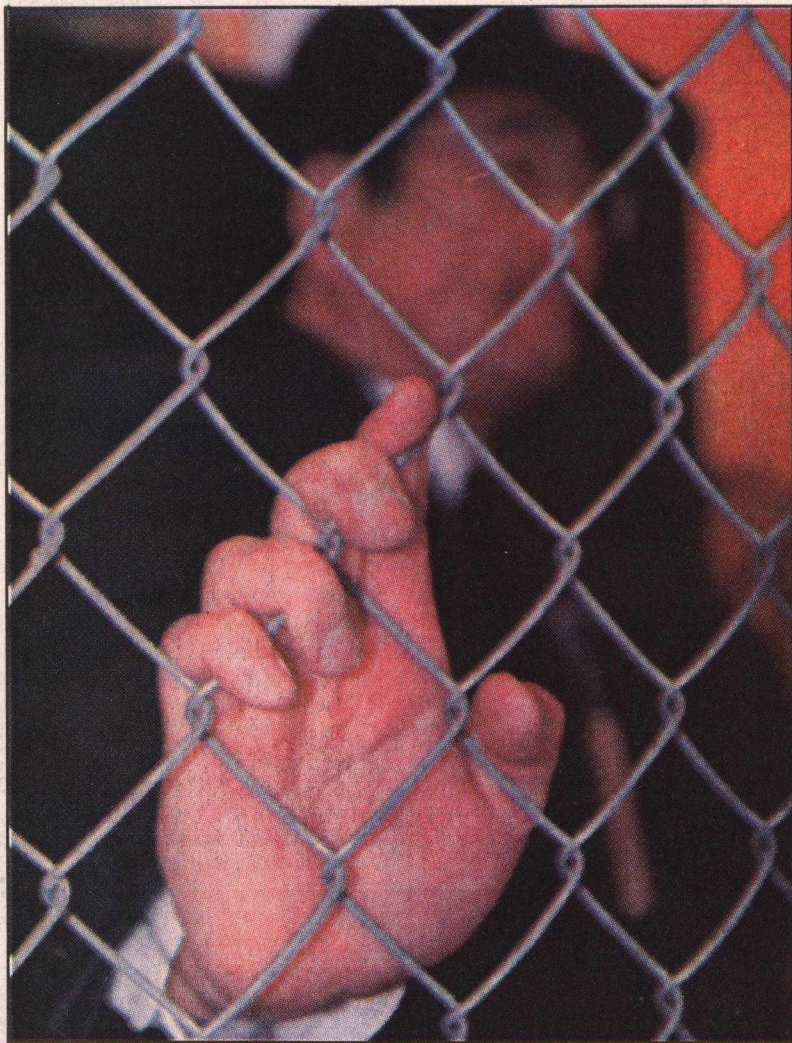
ABOVE: Historian Sandy Lydon explains the unfolding evacuation to an audience of more than 1,000 people Saturday on East Beach Street. ABOVE LEFT: A soldier leads a Watsonville family to a check-in station at the Veteran's Memorial Building. LEFT: Jack and Lu Churchill of Hawaii visit with their granddaughter Kalana Dulaney, 7, prior to the event.

"It was like being taken back in time to what it was like in 1942. ... Even though it is 2002 now, there were just tears welling up in my eyes."

— Lu Churchill, of Kauai







Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

**Ken Tanimoto watches Saturday's audience through a chain-link fence Saturday at the Mello Center's entrance.**

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Beach and Lincoln streets, where the re-enactment continued.

During the re-enactment outside the Vet's Hall, the actors demonstrated local people's stories about bringing only what they could carry, having toys taken away and having to leave pets behind.

"That dog (the one used in the re-enactment), is an exact clone of the one I had to leave behind," said Mas Hashimoto, one of the event's organizers. Like the young girl in the re-enactment, Hashimoto was able to leave his dog with a Caucasian friend during his nearly four years of internment.

For some at the re-enactment it was a first-hand look at something they had only heard about.

"It was really neat and everything, but it was sad," said Vanessa Gonzales, an 11-year-old event volunteer from Watsonville Charter School of the Arts. "My grandma (who was interned) told me about it when I was 7. She said it was really scary."

Katie Arao, a sophomore at Watsonville High School, was an actor in the re-enactment. She said participating in the project filled in a piece of missing family history.

"The process was really hard," she said. "My great uncle wouldn't ever talk about it. The most I ever got from him was that he was confused, and he only told me that a



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

**Rob Mayeda comforts his family as they re-enact boarding a Greyhound bus that will take them to the Salinas Rodeo grounds staging area. The bus really went to the Mello Center.**

few days ago."

More than 1,000 people packed the grandstands outside the Vet's Hall and later the Mello Center to hear stories of the people who were interned and the people of Watsonville who paid bills, stored furniture and supported their long-time neighbors.

People came from throughout the state and even Hawaii for the re-enactment.

"I was born and raised in Santa Cruz and I was in the fourth grade when the evacuation happened," said Lu Churchill of Kauai. "The hardest part was not knowing what was going on. All I knew is that

they were gone."

Churchill is in town visiting her children and grandchildren, who were also at the event.

"It was like being taken back in time to what it was like in 1942," she said. "Even though it is 2002 now, there were just tears welling up in my eyes."