

United States Family Internment Camp, Crystal City, Texas Abstract

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Former Internee
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Many news articles, documents and books were written about WWII Internment Camps located throughout the United States. Most writings were very factual while others, though based on facts, touched on fiction--even romance.

In my papers, *United States Family Internment Camp, Crystal City, Texas*, I turned cold facts into drawings in order to attract the imaginations of the readers. By doing so, I believe, leads readers into greater interests of the Crystal City Internment Camp. So many people contributed vital information to add to the architectural and survey drawings and the facts about individual people. Name-credits were given to all contributors wherever possible.

The theme of these drawings is to show, under war-time conditions, the living standards of both internees and government employees. The Crystal City Internment Camp consisted of numerous ethnic groups: German-American, Italian-American, Japanese-American and Latin-Americans from all over the United States, Hawaii and South America. Languages spoken in this Camp were English, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish. All internees were given the privilege to freely practice religious beliefs of Buddhist, Roman Catholic, Konko, Lutheran, and Shinto.

During years of internment, December 1942 to July 1947, a total 527 German families, 538 Japanese families, a small number of Italian families, and Jewish families from South America resided. These drawings will show that medical care, housing, hygiene, and ample supply of food had priorities.

Evidence of the importance of medical care is of the 70-bed hospital building offering medical attention to 4,751 internees of which 217 children were born into internment; birth certificates reading: "Alien Internment Camp, Crystal City, Texas." A total of 29 children and adults, or 0.6% of the total population, died. So many interned children were in the camp that four schools had to be built. Also, the shortage of teachers, nation-wide,

was so great that qualified interned adults were selected to work as teachers. This internment camp consisted of 543 single and multi-resident housing units, 16 hygiene facilities and 16 general service shops.

The sad part of this Camp was how adults were tricked into signing papers along with the intent of taking advantage of families with children—not by Camp staff members—but by Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), War Relocation Authority (WRA), Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) of the Department of Justice (DOJ). Divided families scattered in a number of internment camps throughout the United States, including Ellis Island, New York, were offered family reunions in Crystal City Camp on the condition that fathers sign agreements to volunteer “repatriation” or deportation to countries of origin including their American born children.

Using entire families with children somehow gave the U.S. Government the bargaining powers in making exchanges for American Diplomats, POWs, etc. Therefore, all families interned in United States Family Internment Camp, Crystal City, Texas, were classified as “Civilian POW.”

One special “Civilian POW” was Hidemaro Saito Ishida (DOB August 19, 1932) who, along with his mother, Chiyoko, his father, Nitten, three sisters and two brothers, was interned in the U.S. Family Internment Camp, Crystal City, Texas. While in the Camp, the Ishida family was assigned to bungalow D-61-A. By the time Hidemaro turned 15, he and his family were back to San Francisco.

When Hidemaro turned 19 he enlisted in the US Air Force, trained as a gunner, and was assigned as a crew member on a B-29A Superfortress Bomber with the 28th Bomber Squadron, 19th Bomber Group.

On January 29, 1953, the aircraft was shot down by two MIGs eleven miles south of Pyongyang at Pae-san Peak, North Korea. Hidemaro was taken Prisoner of War and presumably died as a prisoner on January 30, 1954. Speculation has it that Hidemaro was held POW after the Korean War ended and possibly convicted of war crime.

So here we have a child who served time as a “Civilian POW” by the US Government only to end up as an adult in a North Korean military POW camp in which he died.

The Ishida family can be found in Schedule “C” - Interned Families of Japanese Origins, the family’s bungalow D-61 as seen in Schedule “D” - Assigned Bungalows. Hidemaro’s personal story is in Schedule “E” - People & Events entitled “A Special Circumstance” (Right Center).