

## Book Review

THE IMMIGRANT'S WAY By Margaret W. Wong Esq.

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*August 3, 1910-Altoona, Pennsylvania: Samuel Brandwan became a United States Citizen. Also listed on his Certificate of Naturalization are his wife, Rebecca (Friedland) and their son, Samuel, who was the first child of the first generation of my Grandfather's family to be born in America. Barbara Nisenson*

The Immigrant's Way is part memoir, part textbook, and part guidebook. Through personal experience and wisdom, extensive research, and detailed instructions, Margaret Wong takes the reader on a journey along the rewarding, yet often challenging, road to reaching the American Dream. It is a journey that requires courage and determination. However, there are many resources available to assist the traveler in navigating through the maze of linguistic, cultural, and bureaucratic rest-stops on the path to the Green Card and U.S. Citizenship, which is the golden prize of the Golden Land.

From a personal perspective, Ms. Wong offers helpful hints on such topics as personal conduct and demeanor which can influence how one is perceived and treated by government officials. She gives tips on ways to maintain emotional support and remain optimistic when one is separated from family and friends by thousands of miles. Practical advice also emphasizes the importance of obtaining qualified legal service and guidance to ensure that proper procedures are followed and deadlines are met, since laws and policies change frequently and are usually extremely confusing to someone who is not knowledgeable about immigration law. When in doubt, consult an attorney. By consulting a professional, even if it seems like a minor question or issue, a major problem can be prevented. Better safe than sorry should be the rule of thumb.

For the serious student of immigration history, the book contains an extensive bibliography. As each period of new immigration is discussed, Ms. Wong presents sections on the major ethnic groups that came here in large numbers during that time frame. With scholarly diligence, her research cites dozens of sources for further study. This portion of the book is structured so that it could be easily adapted for use as a study unit in schools, at various grade levels.

The language of the immigration process is a foreign tongue even for those whose first language is English. Imagine how confusing and frustrating it is for people who are attempting to master standard and conversational English and are confronted with Governmentese. While the glossary of abbreviations and government agencies that the book contains gives much helpful information, it highlights the importance of consulting immigration attorneys who are fluent in the terms, definitions, and requirements and are able to interpret the regulations correctly. Misunderstanding, while it may be the innocent result of a language barrier or being poorly informed, can lead to disastrous consequences.

In the case of individuals who have not entered the United States through legal channels, the book details various scenarios on how this can affect their status and chances of remaining here without constant fear of deportation as they pursue the goal of permanent residency or citizenship. Non-citizens are permitted, in many instances, to reside here at the whim of the U.S. Government, so planning and strategy is a vital element of the journey to the American Dream. An example of how emergency measures can be taken that affect thousands of immigrants has occurred just prior to the writing of this article. A devastating earthquake has decimated Haiti, prompting Janet Napolitano, Director of Homeland Security to authorize temporary protected status of up to 18 months for a few hundred thousand Haitians who are here illegally. Certainly, this is a compassionate response to the tragedy in their homeland. However, it serves to emphasize the need to be familiar with and follow the ever-changing rules and regulations which control how secure a person can feel from the time he or she enters the United States until the goal of citizenship is attained.

The Immigrants Way is a true, honest description of what makes America so special. Every person, from every country, who has ever come here, has contributed beautiful and colorful threads to the tapestry. Each generation is a pioneer and guide for the ones to come as they complete their journeys along the extraordinary road that is The Immigrant's Way.