

**SEABISCUIT REDEDICATION**  
**Speech by Sox Kitashima**  
**Monday, September 23, 1991**

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor during World War II, Executive Order 9066 issued by President Roosevelt on 2/19/42, evacuated and disrupted the lives of over 110,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast and confined them behind barbed wire under armed guard. All were denied due process.

Given as little as 48 hours, Japanese Americans suffered enormous damages and losses, both material and intangibles.

They were detained at first in 15 assembly centers which were racetracks and livestock exhibition halls throughout the west coast.

72,000 were American citizens. 25,000 were children. 33,000 Japanese Americans fought for the U.S. during the war. Many volunteered from these camps to prove their loyalty. Their unit was one of the most decorated unit in U.S. history.

On 4/28/42, Japanese Americans living in the Bay Area were herded into Tanforan racetrack and lived in horse stalls until 10/13/42. I remember one internee named his horse stall "Seabiscuit".

My mother, three adult brothers and I shared one horse stall and slept on a hay-filled sack for a mattress. The order was not limited to aliens but included any person with 1/16th Japanese blood, irrespective of citizenship.

Our old folks endured human tragedy--lost their lifetime possessions--but most of all, they lost their dignity and their basic human rights. They battled psychological stress of confinement.

We left Tanforan and were moved to a permanent camp in Topaz, Utah for the duration. When the West Coast opened to Japanese Americans again, I came to San Francisco to make it my home.

Finally last October, over 48 years after the camps, the government apologized. America has shown its greatness.

Today I am pleased that the Tanforan shopping center is rededicating the equestrian statue "Seabiscuit" and the plaque that denotes the site of the assembly center that held over 8,000 Japanese Americans during World War II.

The first "Day of Remembrance" program commemorating Executive Order 9066 was observed on this parking lot in 1979.

## **SEABISCUIT REDEDICATION (page 2)**

When Mr. Darren Thomas called me regarding the rededication ceremony I was moved. Just as "Seabiscuit" left his mark here, the internment plaque will serve its historical purpose.

The mass evacuation of Japanese Americans is a dark chapter in our history. It is in a period of crisis that civil liberties are most endangered.

Although my life at Tanforan Assembly Center was the most grim period of my 3 years and 4 months of confinement, each time I come to this shopping center I become nostalgic.

The Japanese American people join me in giving warm thanks to the Hapsmith Co. for designating this site for a monument and for promoting public awareness that will serve to remind our future generation--that what happened in 1942 should never be repeated.

Thank you for inviting me to be a part of this historic event.  
I love you all!