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JOURNEY TO TANFORAN

Commemorating the 65th Anniversary of the
Tanforan Assembly Center and Executive Order 9066

June 2, 2007 | The Shops at Tanforan, San Bruno, California

Journey To Tanforan was the first formal gathering held at the former assembly center. It commemorated the 65th Anniversary of the Tanforan Assembly Center and President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066.

The Tanforan Assembly Center was one of 15 temporary detention facilities used by the U.S. Military to incarcerate over 120,000 Japanese Americans. As a former horse racetrack, the Tanforan Assembly Center housed some of its 8,000 Japanese American internees in horse stalls for six months while more permanent concentration camps were constructed. Today, Tanforan is a large and bustling shopping mall, where shoppers and surrounding residents have little or no knowledge of what transpired at the site 65 years prior.

To honor this historical injustice, Journey To Tanforan gathered approximately 1,000 individuals—including some of the 64 former internees who were born at the Tanforan Assembly Center. To ensure maximum participation from the elderly Nisei, the JCCCNC coordinated shuttle buses from various Bay Area communities to transport them on their journey back to Tanforan. Attendees were welcomed to observe a reenactment of the strict internment procedures, stroll through a series of well-curated visual, historical and interactive exhibits and attend a formal ceremony that recognized Japanese American internees, veterans and a former Tanforan military guard. Lastly, a commemorative garden was unveiled at the shopping center to memorialize the Tanforan Assembly Center experience.

The event educated successfully both the descendants of those incarcerated and many of the San Francisco Bay Area about the circumstances of forced relocation and incarceration of Japanese Americans.