

Kennedy Connection Leads to Glimpse of Japanese Horse Racing

As the U.S. recently marked the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963, this writer noted photos of his daughter, Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg (?) far from Stateside memorials--- in Japan. As the newly appointed U.S. Ambassador to Japan, JFK's only surviving child, now 55, was snapped in an elegant horse drawn coach *en route* to present her letters of credit.

Strange turn of events that Caroline should find herself where her father fought and became a WWII hero. Now his daughter, whose mother was a talented equestrian and horse lover, was continuing the horse connection. That same Jacqueline Kennedy, drawing inspiration from the funeral procession a century earlier of Abraham Lincoln had requested a horse-drawn caisson to bear JFK's coffin to burial, behind the riderless horse with stirrups turned backwards – symbol of a fallen leader. As a preschooler, Caroline had her own pony quartered right at the White House.

Kennedys in Japan is an interesting, but almost quirky association. Kennedys and horses is an only slightly more obvious link. Horses in Japan is however, neither quirky nor unexpected.....to those in the know. Check out some interesting items if you are not “in the know.”

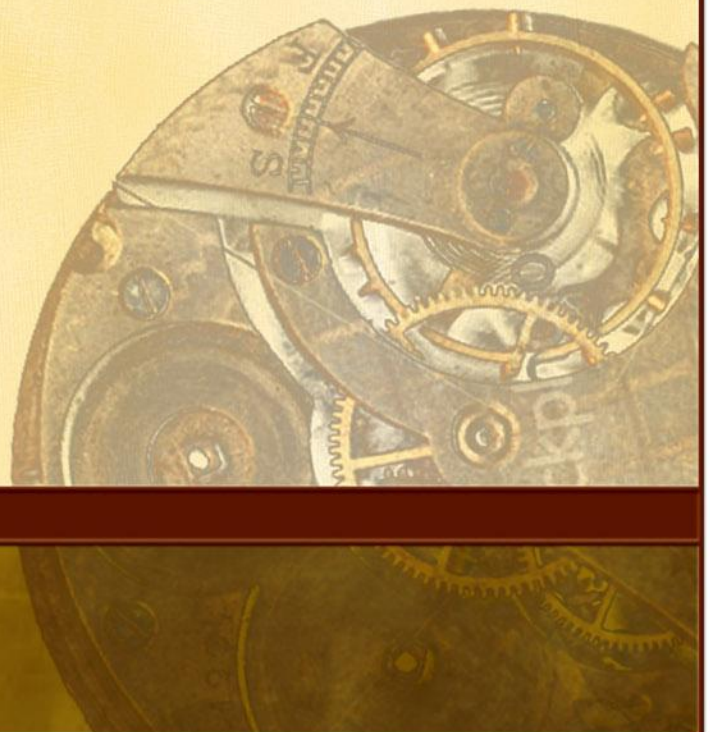
-The Japan Cup, with the largest purse in the world for turf racing, is worth over \$5 million.

-Even jump races, like the Nakayama Grand Jump, carry weighty purses valuing over \$1 million.

-Purses of over \$7,500 are easily found at low-level races which is one reason why Japanese jockeys have little incentive to ride internationally. Foreign jockeys ride only by invitation and usually only a very limited number of them are invited simultaneously.

-Japan has some 50 racetracks with over 20,000 races annually despite being open only on week-ends unlike European courses.

- Consensus attests to the high quality of the horses running in Japanese races. The Yoshita family is perhaps most prominent among those vying for impressive animals acquired worldwide. Japanese horsebreeding programs appear to be



recovering from damage done by stories such as that of Kentucky Derby winner, Ferdinand. After his sale to Japan without subsequently delivering good foals, the prized stud met a sad fate, without notice, at an *abattoir*.

-The ambiance of a Japanese racetrack has been likened to a British football stadium with adoring fans screaming at the sight of idols like Kizuna jockey Yutaka Take....and garnering a younger fanbase than other international horse events.

-Japanese horse racing has operated amidst an atmosphere somewhat sullied by gamblers. It is now positioning itself as a nation with clean horseracing and a leader in drug testing research. Their rules, however, sometimes differ from other countries. France disqualified the well-known horse, Deep Impact, for failing a test for a medicine banned there, but admitted widely elsewhere.

-Thousands of supporters from individual fan clubs have travelled in recent years to Paris' *Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe* to cheer their favorite horses. Posters of horses are a common sight in Japan.

-Japanese Ban'ei brings together draft horses which pull heavy sleds over a 200 meter obstacle course.

-Central Japan's Soma -Nomaioi Festival is a three day 1000 year old wild horse race. Samurai horsemen carrying swords compete in lavish, historical attire.

The Editor

INTERMED XP drew on material from several sources for this article including: [Winning Post](#)-CNN's monthly horseracing show and in particular from Sheena McKenzie's post of August 2013. Matt Majendie for CNN October 4, 2013

