

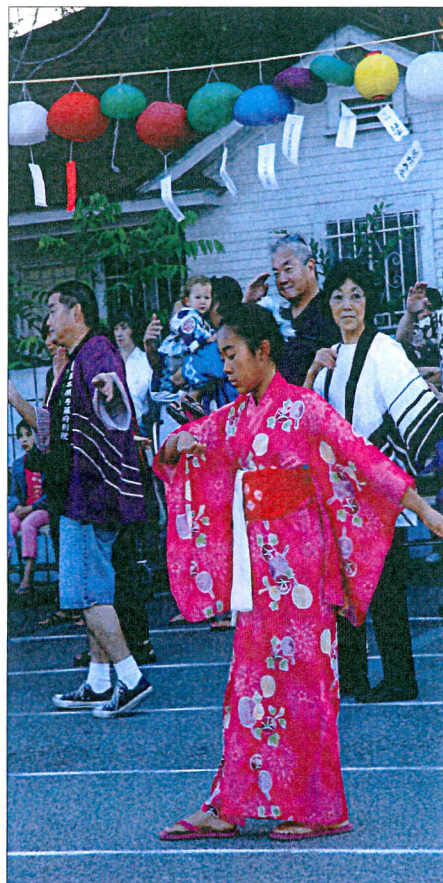


## HATSUBON & BON ODORI

Thank you to all who participated in Senshinji's annual Bon Odori. With a crowd of 400~500 participants, we filled our maximum capacity. The Hatsubon Lantern Service began at 5:30pm followed by our Bon Odori at 7:30pm. This year we had 10 special guests from the Sairakuji Temple in Shobara City, Hiroshima Prefecture Japan. Led by the resident minister Rev. Daito Sadamitsu, the group came specifically to observe how Bon Odori is conducted in Jodoshinshu temples in the U.S. We told them that Senshinji's Bon Odori is not really representative of those held in Southern District but they came knowing that and recently sent their regards and thanks for a "fantastic experience". Pictures of this year's Bon Odori are on the bulletin board.

Since our beginnings over 50 years ago, Senshin had their fund-raising carnival and their Bon Odori as separate events. When our carnival was dropped as a fund-raiser in the 1970's, Bon Odori continued as Bon Odori as dancing only with one food and refreshment booth for the dancers. If you came to Senshinji's Bon Odori, you came to dance, and if you came and watched, you were urged, sometimes taunted, to dance by the dancers. Dancing was the point at our Bon Odori, and out of this grew an attitude

and special meaning of dancing. It was to come as you were, whether you knew the dance or not, whether you had yukata or not. The essential thing was to dance, not showing off, not being embarrassed, but to forget the self long enough to "just dance", and in that moment of just dancing to suddenly remember and sense a deep connection to our deceased loved ones and, on a deeper level, to all things living and dead. It is a "tariki-like moment" where everything is perfect and in its harmonious place. And when you come out of that moment,



everything old becomes suddenly new, it has a new vibrancy that is seen individually and communally. Bon Odori is after all and at long last - not just a summer festival to eat, drink, be merry, and make a few bucks - it is a religious event celebrated by a religious community by members living and dead.

Thank you to the Senshin Sangha for always coming together, without specific assignments and clear-cut leadership (things not particularly valued in our group), and providing the considerable energy required to set-up and break-down for this even - and this in a humorous rag session atmosphere so typical of Senshin. Thanks too to all the affiliated organizations for food preparation, the Jr. YBA for setting up the 1000 oil lamps, and to Kinnara and other artists for volunteering their talents at the Horaku entertainment after Bon Odori. Thanks too to those Sangha members from other temples who join us each year and help magnify this spirit of Bon Odori.

Gassho, Rev. Mas