



Historically, lantern floating has been part of the nationwide tradition in Japan of paying respect to ancestors during the Obon festival season.



## PEACE LANTERN CEREMONIES: From Japan to Berkeley

The first atomic bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945 on Hiroshima, Japan. Although many people were killed instantly, some survived. Many were burned, enduring such unbearable heat and pain that they threw themselves into the rivers. In 1948, the survivors and citizens of Hiroshima floated lanterns on the rivers to mark the anniversary of the bombing, praying that their parents and friends killed by the A-Bomb may rest in peace. It is now an annual event, drawing tens of thousands to float lanterns on Hiroshima's rivers in memory of the A-Bomb survivors.

The second A-Bomb was dropped on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945.

### THE FIRST BERKELEY JAPANESE LANTERN CEREMONY IN 2002

In March 2002, a member of the City of Berkeley Peace and Justice Commission, Steve Freedkin, was invited to Japan to speak at a peace conference.

On the first day of his visit, he toured the Osaka Peace Museum, where he met Ms. Takako Iga, a survivor of the firebombing of Osaka during World War II. Ms. Iga explained to him that Osaka and most other Japanese cities were destroyed by incendiary bombs during the war.

Steve asked Ms. Iga whether she attends a peace lantern ceremony every August. She said she used to, but her health does not always allow her nowadays. Deeply moved by her story, Steve promised he would attend such a ceremony each year on her behalf.

With support from the Berkeley Peace and Justice Commission, the City Council and numerous community organizations and individuals, the first annual Bay Area Peace Lantern Ceremony was held at Aquatic Park on Aug. 9, 2002. More than 100 people participated that year; by 2006, the annual event had grown to more than 650.



Traditionally, the Japanese write a victim's name and their own names on a lantern. But these days, many participants write prayers for peace or draw pictures on the lanterns and float them.