

## Birthdays

Birthday celebrations are a custom unique to humans. Our very first true *birth* day does not seem all that important to us but certainly does get our mom's undivided attention.

*That's Miranda below.*



We bask in the glow of all the excitement generated by the custom of providing us with a cake of our very own on our first birthday. It is rather confusing to actually be encouraged to drag our fingers through the frosting and eat the cake (usually gooey chocolate!) with our hands. It seems that the worse mess we create, the happier the people around us are and EVERYBODY smiles.

*The kids below are Justin, Abby, Matthew and Ben.*





Normally Mom would be having a fit and would be wiping off our face with the hated wet rag, but, today she is the one holding that little square silver or black box that makes flashes of light. Dad has the video recorder in hand.

*The still-clean kid below is Cindy Ellen.*



*Another first birthday: Miss Emma and her mom.*



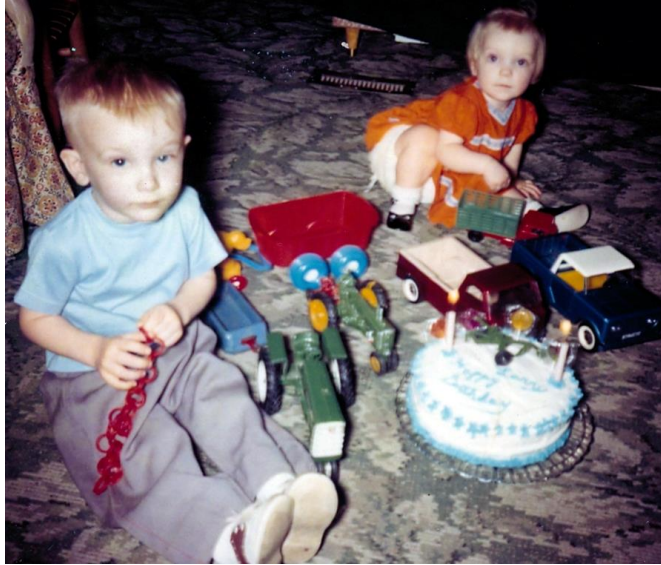
*Amelia was "Pretty in Pink".*



After a couple of more years, we get the gist that birthdays mean more TOYS!



*The two rug-rats below are Larry and Lori.*



*Miss Emma turned two.*



This is great fun and we milk it for all it is worth. When asked how old we are, we often give some wild answer and our family just smiles.

*That is Larry below with his precious Emma and Anna*



During the lower years of grade school the big birthday event is parties with our classmates. We have contributed to the cause -- and gave some gifts that we would have rather kept ourselves -- to numerous classmates at their parties and now it is finally time to rake in some of the benefits.

*Below is Dalton's birthday party on northern Virginia:*





*In the picture below, Grandson Ryan is celebrating his 5th birthday:*



*That is Randy below, raking in the loot.*



A few more years and we are looking forward to birthdays because they mean we are on our way to being “older” and that seems to be the goal of kids our age. We sometimes even fib to strangers and add a couple of years on to our true age; our family just smiles. *That's Lori's special*

*day below: Her birthday is June 19...note the Christmas decoration still on the wall....go figure!*



*Birthdays were a family affair. Below in back: Bob Faist, Merlyn Greenfield, and Folkert Saaijenga. In front: Cindy, Sandi, Larry, Lori, Randy and Marion Greenfield.*





*In the picture below, Emma is twelve,*



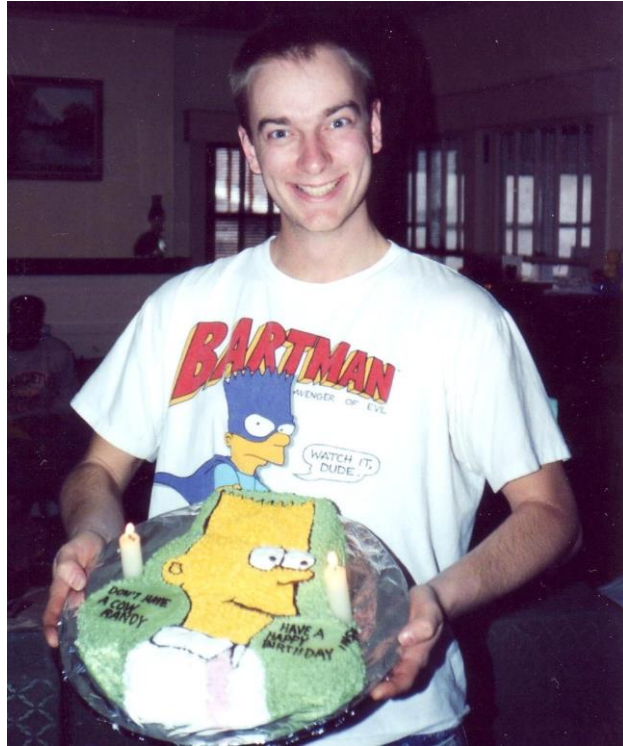
Before long we are actually sixteen and that means **DRIVERS' LICENSE!!!**



By this time we often choose to celebrate with our friends and only consent to family gatherings after badgering from Mom. Secretly, we still love being the guest of honor but pride makes us



pretend it is just for Mom. Mom just smiles because she is “on to us”.



All too soon we are parents ourselves and the main enjoyment we get from our birthday events is watching our kids “help” us blow out the candles.

*See Cindy with her Ben and Abby in the picture below.*



*See Cindy, Abby and Morgan below:*



In our late 30's our friends and family begin to ask pointed questions about how old we really are. And our kids look at us in disbelief that we could actually be that old! The questions come from them about how it felt to ride the glaciers to school.

By 40 the dreaded black balloons and Styrofoam cemetery stones appear at our birthday celebration and everybody laughs ---- except us. Deep inside we are jolted into the realization that we are not teenagers anymore.

*That's my kids' Grampa Folkert Saaijenga below in 1957:*



About 50 the old age jokes cease because it does not seem so funny anymore and you get nice potted plants from your family and friends. You may even be tempted to fib to strangers about your age and your family just smiles.

*Mom is 29 1/2? Allrightythen!!!*



*Grampa Folkert had his own train cake in 1958:*



I am 62 now and it is the best age yet! I can finally be myself and nobody tells me to act my age -- they wouldn't DARE! I strongly believe that, at this age, birthdays are not just a reason for a



party. They are a reason to give thanks for a good life and the fact that you are still able to celebrate. Jim and I got a late start for our life together; I am praying for a good many more birthdays so we can catch up on a whole lot of living. Now the grandkids “help” us blow out our candles and EVERYBODY smiles.



*Beloved Grampa Faist loved birthdays and he always got a cake:*

