

Birthmas



They say as you get older birthdays aren't as big a deal as they were when you were young, but I wouldn't know anything about that because I have never had one. A birthday that is. Allow me to explain.

I was born on Dec. 27, or, as I used to tell people when I was 5 years old, two days after Jesus. The big difference, besides the obvious ones, was that people have always made a big deal about His birthday, but mine? Not so much. I can honestly say that I can't ever remember having a birthday party of my own. I got so desperate for a celebration of some sort that one year I threw a surprise birthday party for myself. But even I forgot that one.

The problem with having a birthday so close to Christmas, as all my fellow Birthmas babies will agree, is that everyone is either so excited about the upcoming Christmas, or so tired afterwards, that they just don't feel like celebrating such an inconsequential birthday. I mean, how do you compete with Christmas?

With a post-Christmas birthday everyone is so busy taking down Christmas decorations, sobering up, going back to work and figuring out how to pay for everything that the last thing on their mind is another birthday. Albeit a very important one. The only other people who might understand the way we Birthmas babies feel are presidents Washington and Lincoln who had their birthdays combined. I think we ought to be like Thoroughbred horses and all celebrate our birthdays on Jan. 1 so you'll all know how we feel.

I don't know which is worse, being born before, after or actually on Christmas Day, but I do know that by the time Dec. 27 rolls around, everyone is so full of turkey they have no room for birthday cake. They are broke and are not in a celebratory mood.

That's why every year at Christmas my relatives would say, "Since your birthday is so close to Christmas, we bought you a very special gift to combine the two." Which was a bunch of bull.

Santa never did me any special favors either and even now if I get any birthday presents at all you can bet they were purchased at the Dollar Store.

One “very special” year my sister and brother pooled their limited resources to buy me a 10-cent plastic ruler. I think I was about 22 years old at the time. I always figured that had I been born in slow holiday months like June or July my adult sibling tightwads may have splurged on a “very special” 10-cent pencil as well.

But even those presents were better than the electric blanket my grandparents gave me one year as my special Birthmas present. “Two days after Jesus” that electric blanket caught fire in the middle of the night and nearly cooked my goose.

We couldn't sue the people who sold it to us because it was my grandpa. (He owned a furniture store.) Oh, I suppose we could have sued him but it might have strained family relations, which were already tense. He was made even more embarrassed by the burned mattress that sat on our front lawn and the fact that he was also the fire chief!

I was scarred for life one “very special” year when I was about 9 and everyone completely forgot it was my birthday until 5 in the evening when I reminded them all. I asked my mom, “Do you know what day it is?”

Tiredly, my mother looked at the calendar and replied, “It's Dec. 27. Oh my God, it's your ... “Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you ...!”

She then scrambled around to make the day extra special by cooking up two of my brother's favorite foods, lima beans and lasagna, which I always hated. I suppose she just forgot that too. She then grabbed a pair of my three-year-old Levis out of the dirty clothes hamper, put a bow on them and gave me my “very special” Birthmas gift.

I used that against her for years and she felt like a bad mother until her dying day. Which just so happened to fall on, you guessed it, my birthday!

It's the Pitts

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