



World Kids



PAL Project

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This is a very SPECIAL issue of the World Kids PAL Project for two reasons - not only is it number THIRTY, but it is also our LAST issue! It was in June of 2003 that we sent out our first issue of what was then called the World Kids PAL Page, and since then we have shared all kinds of fascinating information and stories about what life is like for children in different parts of the world. In a way it is sad that we will not be sending out any more, but we want to remind you that all of our past issues (teaching about over 40 countries and MANY different topics!) are available to download free from our website www.imofinc.org. We will continue to add new games, teachings and informative messages to our website so we hope that you will check it out from time to time.

I believe we really can celebrate because we have connected with HUNDREDS of children from many countries around the world, and we look forward to staying in touch with you in the future too! So this month we want to talk about the different celebrations that we enjoy during our lifetime. On the news recently it was announced that the oldest living person right now is a lady who lives in Jacksonville, Texas - just about 35 miles down the road from us! She is over 114 years old - now THAT is something to celebrate! Birthdays are probably



what we think of most when we plan a celebration - after all, it's our own special day each year! But not everyone knows exactly WHEN they were born - in some countries the exact day is not recorded, and children who are abandoned soon after birth often do not know exactly how old they are. Our friend, Saroj, in **India** has a home for orphaned girls, and last week they all enjoyed a very SPECIAL BIRTHDAY PARTY - to celebrate the birthdays of every one of them, even if they did not know the date of their birth! You can see from this photo how much they enjoyed themselves!!

When we lived in **Mexico**, many poor families could not afford to celebrate their childrens' birthdays, and that is sadly the case for many children around the world, so sometimes birthdays are celebrated traditionally only at certain ages, such as 3 and 15. Girls in Mexico usually have a very special 15th birthday, called a "quincenara" which also marks their coming of age, or entrance into adulthood. Traditionally this is a huge party (often costing as much as a wedding!) when the girl wears a beautiful dress (such as in the picture), has several attendants, receives many gifts, and everyone enjoys a delicious meal. However in recent years, some girls prefer to have the money spent on something more practical, such as a car!



Coming of age celebrations are celebrated in almost every culture around the world. Maybe you have heard of the "Bar Mitzvah" or **Jewish** coming of age ceremony for boys at the age of 13. Bar Mitzvah means "son of the commandment" and marks when the boy becomes obligated under Jewish law to observe the commandments. He can



also then take part in leading religious ceremonies, sign contracts and even marry. For a girl, it is called the Bat Mitzvah (when she reaches the age of 12). Most families like to celebrate this event and some do so with a religious ceremony followed by a huge, elaborate reception. A similar religious celebration is found in the Roman Catholic Church (and some other Christian denominations) where it is called Confirmation, and girls often wear white dresses, like a bride, to show their purity. In **Japan** all young people who turn 20 years old in that year celebrate the Coming of Age Festival called "Seijin no hi" on the second Monday of January. Every town across the nation celebrates with most of the people turning 20 participating in formal dresses.

In **India**, among the Tamil who are mostly Hindus, a young girl coming of age often must go through the Turmeric Bathing Ceremony. This involves many rituals while she spends more than 10 days apart from other people. There are many superstitions such as she must not look at birds on an empty stomach; she must not touch flowering plants (or they may die), or touch stored food such as rice or salt as it may be spoiled. Finally after a special cleansing, she may celebrate with a lavish public ceremony where she wears her first sari and receives gifts. For the rich, this is often even advertised with her picture on a billboard for all to see!



However in some countries, the Coming of Age celebrations are NOT much fun! In **Australia**, adolescent Aborigine boys are sent "walkabout" to live in the wilderness for as long as six months - having to find food alone and deal with poisonous snakes and other animals! It's not just about camping - they go on a spiritual journey to trace their ancestor's songlines, which include navigation instructions and other ancient wisdoms encoded in songs. To become men in the Satere Mawé tribe of the **Amazon**, boys as young as 12 have to first wear ceremonial gloves filled with stinging "bullet ants" - and being stung by them feels very much like getting shot! Each ant has poison that causes pain 30 times more agonizing than the sting of a common wasp! And if you think that is hard, wearing the gloves once isn't enough - you have to wear them for 10 minutes, 20 different times to become a man!



Of course there are other celebrations as we pass through life - one of the most important being weddings. Every year after that, couples often celebrate their wedding anniversary, and in the West there are some special anniversaries - after being married for 25 years the Silver Wedding is celebrated (when traditionally silver gifts are given to the couple); after 50 years it is the Golden Wedding anniversary (when hopefully gifts of gold may be received!); then for those couples who go on to enjoy 60 years of marriage there is the Diamond anniversary; and after that, EVERY wedding anniversary should be a special celebration! Similarly in a nation or empire where the king, queen or emperor rules for many years, there are often special "Jubilee" celebrations. In **England**, Queen Victoria ruled the British Empire from 1837 to 1901 and in 1897 there was a huge celebration in the country to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee (after reigning 60 years). Emperor Hirohito of **Japan** also celebrated his Diamond Jubilee in 1986.



In 2012 Queen Elizabeth II of **Great Britain** will have reigned as queen for 60 years, so there are already plans for her Diamond Jubilee



Maybe you can think of some other events in your lifetime that are also causes for celebration - such as completing or graduating from High School or university; getting engaged to be married; moving into a new home; celebrating the birth of children or grandchildren... Every culture has its own different ways to celebrate. In the **USA**, you may receive an invitation to attend a "shower" - coming from England, I thought that had something to do with rain, but it means a party to celebrate a coming wedding or birth of a baby! Maybe in your family you are not able to celebrate much (like the orphan girls in India) but you do not need to feel alone - as we read through the Bible we find that although weddings were celebrated (often for many days), and God gave the Israelites special holidays such as Passover and Pentecost, there was no mention of birthdays or anniversaries celebrated in the lives of the people. Some people waste their lives always waiting and looking forward to some special day in the future; others sadly look back to the past, missing the "Good Old Days". Here's a final Bible passage for you to figure out:

"A SGOD 'SPART NER SWEB EGY OUN OTTO ACCEP TTHI SMARVE LOUS GIF TO FGO D'SKIN DNES SAND THE NIGNO REIT. FORGO DSA YS:"ATJUS TTHER IGHETTI ME IHEAR DYUO. ONTHED AYOF S ALVA TIO NIHEL PEDY OU."INDE EDTHE "RIG HETTI ME" ISNOW. TOD AYIST HEDA YOF S ALVA TION."

The most important day of all is TODAY so do your best to love and serve God today and every day - and then you will be blessed and enjoy ALL the days of your life!

Love and blessings, your friend, Shirley

Facts from: www.religioustolerance.org/wicpuber.htm <http://www.neatorama.com/2009/09/15/6-strangest-coming-of-age-rituals-in-the-world/> <http://richardarunachala.wordpress.com/2009/03/17/tamil-coming-of-age-manjal-neerattu-vizha/> Scripture passage: 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 (NLT)

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