

The Mass-Observation Project

Summer 2002 Directive



Part 1: Birthdays

Everybody has a birthday once a year. It is part of the annual cycle. How important are birthdays as we grow older? This is what this Directive is intended to explore.

We would first like you to describe as simply as possible what happened at your last birthday:

- when it was
- how old you were
- what you did that day
- how, if at all, it was celebrated
- how many cards or presents you received
- from whom
- what else do you remember about the day?

As usual, please remember to start your reply with a very brief mini-biography: your M-O number, (NOT name), sex, age, marital status, town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

Remember not to identify yourself or other people inadvertently within your reply.

Please draw up a list of those people who tend to remember your birthday. Perhaps they forget some years, but most years they remember. All we want on the list are two questions answered about each: how are you related to them (or how do you know them), and how old are they (guess, if you don't know).

Now the same again but the other way round: a list of those special people whose birthdays you like to remember.

Describe the most memorable birthday you have ever been involved in. It might have been yours or it might have been someone else's. Why was it so memorable? What happened that day?

Looking over what you have already written, what do you think is the significance of birthdays for you, your family and friends? What for you are the ingredients of 'a good birthday'? How have they changed over the years: attitudes, celebrations, experiences, cards and their messages? How do you think growing older changes the meaning of birthdays?

To complete this Directive, we want you to keep a record of seven consecutive days, starting with the day when you finish writing your reply to the above questions. At the

end of each of the seven days, simply list every occasion when someone's age or birthday had been mentioned: family, friend, acquaintance, someone in the news, or even yourself. In particular if a recent or forthcoming birthday was mentioned, make a note of any comments or thoughts you have which will cast further light on the questions we have raised.

And what about the birthdays of people who are no longer with us? How are these days marked by you or by people you know and family members?

Part 2: Issues in the news

In this section, please feel free to pick a subject that most interests you and give your opinion and describe any experiences you have had which you feel are relevant. If you have the time, please respond under all headings. If you feel that there are other more crucial issues which we have not listed, then please say so and comment on them.

Of course I realise all these themes could take up a whole directive in themselves - and I don't want to make too many demands on you, but I hope you'll agree that they are important enough for us to have some coverage of them.

You can put these all on continuous pages but please put in headings so that it is easy to see which subjects you are covering.

As usual, please start Part 2 on a new page with a very brief mini-biography: your M-O number, (NOT name), sex, age, marital status, town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.

Remember not to identify yourself or other people inadvertently within your reply.

The Queen's Jubilee:

How is/was it for you?
Please describe any festivities or events you attended, any programmes you watched on TV

The World Cup:

Did it have an impact on your life?
Observations and comments please

The state of the trains and transport policy

The war in Afghanistan

Israel and the Palestinian struggle

Iraq and US foreign policy