



Happy Birthday to you!

by Sue Burgess

The Deux-Sèvres Monthly celebrates its fifth birthday with this issue. «**Joyeux anniversaire**» (Happy Birthday).

The different customs that we observe today for birthdays have a long history. Their origins are linked to magic and religion. Ancient practices consisted of offering congratulations «**adresser des félicitations**» and giving presents, «**offrir des cadeaux**». Lighted candles, «**des bougies allumées**» were supposed to protect the person who was celebrating his birthday from demons.



In most Anglo-Saxon countries, but also in others, it is common practice to sing the traditional 'Happy Birthday to You'. «**Joyeux Anniversaire**» is sung in France to the same tune but you can also sing the more traditional «**Bon anniversaire, nos vœux les plus sincères.**»

In France it also used to be traditional to wish someone «**Bonne Fête**» on his Saint's day on the calendar. This custom seems to be dying out somewhat – perhaps because it is no longer compulsory to choose a child's name from the names on the calendar.

If the easiest way to wish someone a Happy Birthday in French is to say «**Joyeux Anniversaire**», (Happy Birthday). Other ways do exist, another simple way is just to say «**bon anniversaire**» (good birthday). You can also say «**Passe une merveilleuse journée**» (have a great day). «**Meilleurs vœux**» means best wishes and «**Félicitations**» is congratulations. If you want to say something a bit longer you can say «**je te souhaite plein de bonheur**» - I wish you lots of happiness. «**Que tu puisses être heureux encore de nombreuses années**» would be the equivalent of many happy returns. «**Que tous tes vœux se réalisent**» (may all your wishes come true).

Sometimes you forget the date of a birthday. So you can ask when someone's birthday is.

When is David's birthday? «**C'est quand, l'anniversaire de David?**». Or, when is your birthday? «**Quand est ton anniversaire?**» Or, to be even more precise – when were you born? «**Quelle est ta date de naissance ?**» «**Quand es-tu né ?**»

And, of course, if you miss the actual date you can always send belated birthday wishes «**Joyeux anniversaire en retard**» or «**meilleurs vœux en retard**».

 **Sue Burgess**
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VOCABULARY / VOCABULAIRE:

le cadeau d'anniversaire	Birthday present
la carte d'anniversaire	Birthday card
le gâteau d'anniversaire	Birthday cake
le goûter d'anniversaire	children's birthday party
souhaiter un bon anniversaire à quelqu'un	to wish someone a Happy Birthday
to celebrate your 40th	fêter ses quarante balais *
to blow out your 40 candles....	souffler ses quarante bougies *
* you can change the numbers	