



## Still a Child?

Since I started writing A Story A Week, there have been four occasions to date that one of my family members has happened to have a birthday on Sunday, the day that the stories are published. My eldest daughter Himi, both of my parents, and my grandson Alex have thus come to be featured in past stories because of this. Today though, I have a bit of a problem; it is the birthday of yet another family member, but it's not so easy for me to write a 'feature' story about him. Or perhaps the problem is that I have written too much about him! Yes, as you can perhaps guess, it's my turn ... I'm 56 today.

In Canada, November 11th is Remembrance Day, set aside to commemorate soldiers killed in the two world wars. That particular date was chosen because it was on the 11th of November in 1918 that the armistice that brought the fighting of the First World War to an end was signed. Observance of this holiday varies quite widely from place to place, but in the years that I was a schoolboy, it wasn't a general closing day, and we all went to school as usual. But exactly at eleven o'clock in the morning, we had to stand by our desks (or sometimes assemble in the gymnasium), and all activity came to a stop for two minutes of silence, in honour of those soldiers.

Now of course, none of this had anything to do with me at all, but because of these things, I always had the feeling that my birthday was a bit of a 'special' day. It's funny though, that the birthday that was supposed to be the most special for me - the one where I became an adult - never happened!

We lived in British Columbia in Canada while I was in my late teens. In that province at that time, what they called the 'age of consent' - the age at which one could vote, sign contracts, and legally act as an adult - was set at 21. Most young people looked forward to their 21st birthday with quite some anticipation, because there was one other activity that became permitted for the first time on that day ... to legally drink!

Honestly speaking, that adult privilege wasn't one that bothered me at all, as I wasn't interested in drinking. (Believe it or not, there are such things as teenagers who don't smoke or drink!) But even without that particular anticipation, of course I was ready to reach the milestone birthday, and become an 'adult'. But I never got the chance! Eh? Am I still a legal 'child'?

No, of course not. Sometime during the years when I was 19 or 20, the government of the day changed the laws, and lowered the age of consent to 19. So on some random day when the law came into force, I became an adult but never even noticed it! And so a short time later when I did become 21 years old, nothing changed at all; it was 'just another' birthday.

Here in Japan, Remembrance Day is of course not recognized at all, as this country has its own commemorative events, so there is really nothing left for me to feel 'special' about. But if I think about it hard enough, perhaps I can find something ... Yes, I've got it!

If you write my birthdate down in normal Japanese fashion - year/month/day - look what you get! 51/11/11 ... a five followed by five ones. Surely, nobody can forget that once they have seen it!

Will you remember next year? :-)

**David Bull**  
**Seseragi Studio**  
**Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City**  
**Tokyo Japan 198-0052**  
**<http://astoryaweek.com>**

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**Seseragi Studio**  
**Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City**  
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