



Esther Bubley—The LIFE Images Collection/Getty Images

PHOTOGRAPHY

How Albert Einstein Celebrated His Birthday

Eliza Berman

Mar 14, 2016



Albert Einstein was not into birthdays. The legendary theoretical physicist, born in Germany on March 14, 1879, resisted being the center of attention, telling LIFE he believed that “birthdays are for children.” But on his 74th birthday, in 1953, he made an exception.

When Yeshiva University of New York requested to build a medical school in his name, he agreed—despite feeling the same way about such honors as he did about birthdays—and attended a fundraising luncheon in his honor.

“For the occasion,” LIFE reported, “Einstein shed his characteristic baggy sweater and slacks, put on a gray suit. But he found it less easy to shed a lifetime of shyness.” He

failed to notice the triple-tier birthday cake presented to him by Cake Bakers Union Local 51. He eyed a slab of roast beef and objected, “This is for lions.”

When all was said and done, the luncheon had raised \$3.5 million for what is now the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. “I am glad it is over,” was all the honoree had to say about it. He died two years later, on April 18, 1955.

Here, in recognition of what would have been Einstein’s 137th birthday, is a collection of LIFE photographers’ greatest images of the extraordinary thinker.

Liz Ronk, who edited this gallery, is the Photo Editor for LIFE.com. Follow her on Twitter [@lizabethronk](#).
