

Okay, what do you want for your birthday? Oh, c'mon, it's not every day you turn 100. Yes, Actors' Equity turns 100 on May 26, 2013; and although you were shamefully irresponsible about showing up during AEA's first few decades, you've been much better in recent years, so I'd like your opinion on how we should mark our centennial.

The Centennial website – www.aea100.org – cites three purposes for the Centennial: 1) to underscore the impact of live theater and its contribution to American culture; 2) to cultivate and expose new audiences nationwide to live theater; 3) to foster respect and appreciation for the art and craft of the professional stage actor and stage manager.

AEA's Council, in keeping with their universal response to any issue, has formed a committee, cleverly named the Centennial Committee, which has been working on this for over a year already – but I'd like your input. [Remember that point from my last column about the running theme in these columns? "Participation and communication?" No? You have been reading these things, right?]

My thought is that the Centennial should focus on two things: Education/Communication and Celebration. We need to let folks who are not in the business -- as well as those in the business (especially our fellow members) -- know who we are, who we've been and what we've done. AEA has done great things for actors and stage managers over the years: rehearsal pay, bonding, sick pay, pensions, etc., etc. AEA has also taken a number of laudatory stands on social issues such as the Black List, segregation and AIDS. We need to spread that word. To that end, in addition to our website, we have a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/AEA100); we have commissioned a coffee-table book; and we're talking about such things as a touring exhibition of Equity history, walking tour podcasts of theatre districts, master classes across the country, and televised roundtable discussions of the actor's craft.

We will also Celebrate. We hope to kick off our Centennial year with something splashy, perhaps a live outdoor event staged in Times Square. We're discussing the possibility of a gala to be televised nationally around the actual centennial date in 2013. We particularly want to celebrate in the local Equity communities around the country; and I am eager for suggestions as to events/festivals we can

focus on and partner with. In the meantime, get started on those aerobic exercises: it's not going to be easy to blow out 100 candles.