

It only comes up every

This week's At Ease takes a look at Leap Year, and the fact and fallacy surrounding the origins and nature of other common, and not so common, holidays.

For example: do you know what **Arbor Day** is? This day is dedicated to trees, their beauty and their preservation. Did you know that **Mother's Day** was founded by a spinster? Did you know that there actually is a **National Maritime Day** on the calendar? What about **Sweetest Day**?

Groundhog Day, Lincoln's Birthday, Valentine's Day, Washington's Birthday, and,

every four years, Leap Day are celebrated in February. Although it's the shortest month, February boasts five major holidays, is Black History Month, and recognizes ... how many millions of birthdays?

Even though Leap Day occurs once every four years, there are several births, deaths, and events that have happened on this day that are significant enough to go down in history.

It's hard to imagine that a day occurring only every four years could have had so much happen during 24 hours that would have world-wide impact, but it does happen.



Leap Year 1984

Calendar corrected

By LAURI REESE
Staff Writer

The function of Leap Year is to keep the calendar in step with the seasons. It is the "calendar corrector" — introduced to eliminate inevitable mathematical and astronomical errors.

According to the Journal of Calendar Reform magazine, it's extremely difficult to construct a calendar that coincides exactly with the tropic or seasonal year due to the fact that the two revolutions involved in determining the length of the day and the length of the year aren't directly related to each other.

A solar year has 365.24219879 days. That means 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds.

Leap Year accounts for those extra 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds.

Leap Year first was recognized in Egypt in the first century B.C., but long before that even Egyptian mathematician-priests saw a need for such a

calendar stabilizer.

The Egyptians determined that the length of the solar year was approximately 365 1/4 days by measuring the angles and shadows of the pyramids, and by sighting fixed stars such as Sirius, the Journal reported.

The first solar calendar had months of 30 days each. Four months made a season. The three seasons were Flood Time, Seed Time and Harvest Time. The year was completed by five holidays and the fraction remaining was allowed to accumulate, carefully recorded.

According to the Journal, in 46 B.C. Julius Caesar introduced the Julian calendar, which was used for 16 centuries. As an early Leap Year measure, Caesar added an extra month between the 23rd and 24th of February.

But with Caesar's rule of one Leap Year in every four, the official calendar year was 11 minutes longer than the seasonal year.

A change often was pro-

posed, but actually was not put into effect until 1582. Pope Gregory issued his "Papal Bull," in which the rule was changed so that after the year 1600, the leap days of three centurial years in every four would be omitted. That is, in every period of 400 years, three Leap Years would be kept as common years. He corrected the existing error by making Oct. 5, 1582, the 15th.

While the Catholic countries generally adopted Pope Gregory's improvement, Protestant Europe didn't agree to it until the beginning of the 18th century, the Journal said. Great Britain and North America didn't make the change until 1752. The last country to adopt the new style was Turkey, which changed in 1927.

An error still exists in today's calendar, however, and it continues to accumulate, the Journal reported. The error amounts to 37.3 minutes every 100 years, or one day in 3,861 years.

Matrimony is ladies' choice in a leap year

By BONNIE LANGFORD
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Leap Year occurs only once every four years. For the confirmed bachelor, this may be a blessing.

The custom of women having the right to "pop the question" can be traced back to Queen Margaret of Scotland. It is believed that in 1288 she decreed, through Parliament, that during a leap year any woman could propose to any man she chose. The only way the aspiring bride could be refused was if the man could prove he already was engaged.

In all other cases, if the bachelor did not wish to marry he had no choice but to break the law. If he persisted in remaining single, he was liable for a fine of 100 pounds (several hundred dollars). In the British Isles, any man that turned down the marriage proposal was required to buy a silk dress for the amorous lady.

The law soon was adopted in Genoa, Florence, France, and England, yet despite the fact the law was practiced, investigation has proven that the act actually is a myth, and legally non-existent. Women for hun-

dreds of years have based their "right" on a "legal fiction."

The clever Scottish males were not to be outwitted by women interested in matrimony, however. In Scotland women who were contemplating using the privilege had to advertise their intentions by wearing scarlet flannel petticoats with the edge clearly visible. This gave the intended bachelor fair warning.

Though the law was non-existent, the actual custom can be traced back to the time of St. Patrick, when celibacy was not the order of the day.

According to legend, one day the saint was approached by St. Bridget, who was in charge of a group of nuns. She tearfully told him that the nuns were in revolt because they weren't allowed to select a mate.

Though St. Patrick vowed to remain single, he sympathized with the women. Total equality couldn't be allowed, he said, but he suggested that they should be able to propose for a

full year, once every seven years.

St. Bridget still was dissatisfied, but knew the way to his heart. She threw her arms around him, called him "her jewel," and explained that the nuns still would be unhappy.

St. Patrick was quick to see her point and agreed that seven years might be too long. He promised, after another hug, that he would change his mind. They agreed on once every four years, in fact the longest year there is — leap year.

Not one to let opportunity slip by, St. Bridget immediately proposed to St. Patrick. Having taken a vow of celibacy, he had no choice but to refuse. However, in his natural gallantry, he softened the blow with a kiss and a silk dress.

Out of this legend was established the custom which gave women the right to a new dress of silk if they were refused for matrimony.