

Why Leap Year? Cosmic Phenomena Once Mystified Calendar-Makers

By EDWARD H. SMITH
Every four years at this, a strange thing happens to the calendar. February grows an extra day.

Thus another Leap Year has made its quadrennial appearance and Friday is the "extra" day. Why?

The earth makes one complete trip around the sun in 365 days, 5 hours, 49 minutes and 12 seconds. That's roughly 365 and one-fourth days, so every four years the calendar men have to throw in an extra day to take up the slack.

Calendar makers haven't always done this, and it used to cause confusion.

The calendar — the reckoning of months, years and days — has always been governed by natural phenomena, the sun, the moon and the stars. In all of the civilizations that ever advanced far enough to bother about what day it was, one round trip of the earth around the sun was a year. One period of daylight and darkness was a day; and one complete transition of the moon from new to full made up a month. This was where the rub came in. A lunar month has only 29 days, and a year based on 12

lunar months was only 354 days long. Every year it got 11 days behind. After a few years like that, the sun and the seasons would be all out of joint with the calendar. People didn't know quite what to expect. They got very confused when the hottest day in the year occurred in the middle of "winter," or when the calendar, usually a notched stick, a mud tablet or a cowhide covered with crude symbols said it was time to plant the corn, while outside the snow was waist deep. The Mohammedans still figure the year on this basis and think nothing of it, sometimes celebrating New Year's Day in the middle of July.

The Egyptians caught on pretty quickly and, in 4241 B. C., divided the year into months that were not based on the cycle of the moon at all. They had twelve 30 day months with five feast days thrown in at the end. This Egyptian year is still the basis for the year as we have it.

Things went along smoothly enough until the Romans began calendaring and put in their two cents worth. By Julius Caesar's time, the spring festivals were coming in the middle of the summer again. Julius brought the Greek astronomer and mathematician Sosigenes to Rome to see if he could straighten out the mess. Sosigenes worked for years while everybody got farther and farther behind — and finally evolved a plan for catching up. It was here that leap year finally came into being. Sosigenes devised a calendar with alternate months of 30 and 31 days, except February which had 29 days, but added one day every four years. They added this day between the 23rd and 24th of February, which everybody agreed was much nicer than merely taking it on the end of the month. At the Greek astronomer's bidding Caesar proclaimed that the year 46 B. C. would have 14 months; and thus the Romans caught up with the sun.

This year was remembered in Roman history as "the year of confusion." Sosigenes worked like a Greek dog straightening out the Romans' calendar, and then they called it the Julian calendar, after Julius Caesar, probably because nobody could

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pronounce Sosigenes.

A little later the Roman emperor Augustus got sore because the month named after Julius — July — had 31 days; while the one named after him — August — had only 30 days; so he took a day off February and gave it to August. But this made three months in a row with 31 days, so to even things out he cut September and November to 30 days and gave a day each to October and December.

After the Julian calendar had been in use for over 1,500 years and the Roman people had begun to get the hang of it, it was found out that the calendar was 10 days wrong again. Correction by a whole day every four years was too much.

In 1582 Pope Gregory XIII lopped 10 days off the calendar. The day after October 4 became October 15, and leap year was amended so that three times in every 400 years they wouldn't have any leap year. This was done by not counting as leap years the ones ending in two zeroes, unless they were divisible by 400. Thus 1700, 1800, 1900, etc., would not be leap years, while 1600 and 2000 would be. This arrangement will work fine until the year 4000, when it will be one day off again. This did not worry the Romans, however, or Pope Gregory, as they figured quite correctly — that they would not be around by then.

The Catholic world accepted the Gregorian calendar right off, but the English thought it over for 200 years before agreeing. When Parliament adopted it in 1752, it became necessary to drop 11 days from that year to make things right. Some people resented this change. Held great meetings in protest, and angry mobs went about in processions, throwing stones at public buildings and shouting "Give us each our eleven days!" The Russians, progressive as always, adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1929.

The change in the calendar caused some confusion in the dating of historical documents. George Washington's birthday, for instance, was February 22, 1732, New Style, or Feb. 11, 1731, old style.

There is a movement afoot now to put in a new World-Calendar, which has alternate 30 and 31 day months. With an extra day — World Day — added at the end every four years. It has been approved in principle, by many of the countries of the United Nations. Senator Estes Kefauver has introduced a bill in the Senate to adopt it in the United States.

The advantage in this calendar is that all holidays would then come on the same day every year. January the first would always come in Sunday. There would be no confusion as to when Easter would come, etc. Holidays could be arranged to fall on Monday every year and thus give longer weekends. There would be exactly the same number of working days in every month, making it easier to compile business statistics.

FRANKFURTER SPAGHETTI
Frankfurters and spaghetti join for a cold winter night special. Heat franks thoroughly, then serve on spaghetti cooked with tomato juice and seasoned with minced onions.

Veterans Prove Good Loan Risks

World War II veterans who have used GI loans on their homes have proved themselves good financial risks. On the basis of their record of repayment, the government has had to pay default claims on a very small percentage of the home loans guaranteed, the Veterans Administration said.

VA's figures show that from the beginning of the GI loan program through the end of 1951, a total of approximately 2,650,000 home loans to veterans had been approved. On this total the Veterans Administration had to pay claims on defaults of approximately 12,600 loans, or less than one-half of one per cent of the loans approved.

On the basis of dollar volume of loans guaranteed and defaults paid, the record is even more impressive, VA said. The 2,650,000 home loans borrowed by veterans made up a total of more than \$16,403,000,000. The net amount of money that the government has had to pay on defaulted claims from these loans is only approximately \$13,600,000. This sum is less than one-tenth of one per cent of the amount borrowed, actually amounting to about 8 cents on each \$100 borrowed.

GI home loans are normally made by a lending institution and guaranteed by the Veterans Administration. Most World War II veterans have until June 25, 1957 to exercise their loan guaranty privileges.

Wake Family Plans New Water System

"There's no point in having good crop years unless some part of it shows up in good home living," says Eugene Johns, Negro farmer of Route 2, Raleigh.

In telling why he is putting in a water system on his place, Johns says that "we've walked too many miles already, and the older we get the farther away that spring seems."

Johns recently attended a one-day farm institute, arranged by W. C. Davenport, Wake Negro farm agent for the State College Extension Service. The group present spent considerable time discussing the advantage of farm water systems and how they might be installed.

Johns left the meeting and got busy right away. The family had never had a well, but has been bringing water up the hill from a natural spring some 500 or more feet away.

Agent Davenport visited the farm and helped the family figure out how to clean out the spring, put in curbing, install a pump, and lay pipe from the spring to the house.

Johns bought a shallow well pump and the necessary pipe from a dealer in Raleigh. At present he is getting other materials such as cement, wire, and posts so that when he begins work on the system he will have everything he needs on hand. He plans to do the work himself.

Dean Ayers In Recruit Training

Undergoing recruit training at the U. S. Naval Training Center, San Diego, Calif., is Dean Ayers, seaman recruit, USN, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Ayers of 105 North Dilling st., Kings Mountain.

Ayers, who entered the Naval service Jan. 26, 1952, attended Kings Mountain high school.

This initial training includes instruction in such fields as seamanship, fire-fighting, gunnery, signaling, and other courses designed to make the recruit well-versed in every phase of Navy life.

Upon completion of their 11-week training period at the training center, recruits are assigned to duty stations with the Fleet or at Navy shore stations, or are sent to service schools for advanced technical training.

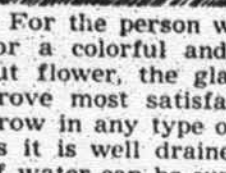


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GARDEN TIME



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For the person who is looking for a colorful and easy-to-grow cut flower, the gladiolus should prove most satisfactory. It will grow in any type of soil as long as it is well drained and plenty of water can be supplied.

The gladiolus should have full sunshine all day for best results. Go easy on the fertilizer, especially fertilizers rich in nitrogen. Care must be taken that the fertilizer does not come into contact with the bulb at planting time. Bulbs should be planted 4 to 5 inches deep and spaced from 4 to 6 inches apart in the row.

For early blooms, plantings may now be made in eastern North Carolina, during March in the Piedmont, and during April in the mountains. For a succession of blooms, make additional plantings at two to three weeks intervals. If you buy your bulbs at local stores, select plump, high-crowned bulbs; they will give

much better results than the large, flat ones. Mixtures are usually cheaper in price than named varieties but there is a great satisfaction in knowing varieties by name.

A few very fine varieties that are reasonably priced are: Snow Princess, Florence Nightingale, Margaret Beaton, Corona, Elizabeth the Queen, Picardy, Blue Beauty, Red Charm, Spotlight, Spic and Span, Chamouny, Gen. Eisenhower, and Burma. There are many other good ones in a wide range of colors.

In cutting the flowers, leave three or four of the lower leaves to develop the new bulb for next year.

Thrips, small sucking insects, may damage the flowers, especially in hot dry weather. They can be controlled by spraying or dusting with DDT every week or ten days.

Safety Hints Given By Agent

Late winter is a good time to check your home wiring and appliances for safety before the rush of spring work begins, says Howard Clapp, county farm agent for the State College Extension Service.

He points out that it's easy to discover and repair: wiring defects that may lead to a costly fire, shock, or interruption in electrical services.

Record of the National Safety Council show that worn or damaged cords are common ailments of electrical appliances.

Before attempting electric repairs, always disconnect the current. When purchasing replacement cords or plugs, choose good quality and the right type for the use intended. Avoid plastic caps that break easily or those which cannot be grasped firmly to pull from a receptacle.

Use cords with asbestos insulation for heating appliances and heavy rubber-jacketed cords for motor-operated equipment. Avoid unnecessary kinking, twisting, knotting or exposure to heat and mechanical injury.

Watch your circuit loads and fusing. An ordinary household circuit with a No. 14 wire should be protected by a 15-ampere fuse. If you use a penny or heavier fuse the conductors will overheat and damage insulation or start a fire if the circuit is accidentally overloaded.

The metal frame of washing machines or other electric appliances used in hazardous locations (where floor, feet and hands may be damp) should be grounded. Worn parts, insulation deterioration or excessive moisture may lead to a short circuit

Garden Guide Now Available

The State College Extension Service announces publication of a 16-page "Garden Guide," single copies of which are available on request.

The publication includes a garden planting calendar showing how many feet of row of various vegetables should be planted for each person in the family. Also included in the calendar are the amount of seed or plants required, recommended planting dates, and recommended varieties.

Other sections of the circular cover selection of garden site, fertilization, soil preparation, and insect and disease control. Also included are a one-year family-conservation plan, information on freezing vegetables, and a special section on canning tomatoes with boiling water bath.

"Garden Guide," was prepared

by H. R. Niswonger, Howard R. Garriss, T. M. Dobrovsky, Rose Ellwood Bryan, and Nita Carr, all of the State College Extension Service staff. It is issued as Extension Circular No. 365. A copy may be obtained from the local county farm or home demonstration agent or by writing the Publications Department, N. C. State College, Raleigh.

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