

LEAPERS: Technology doesn't always allow for the Feb. 29 date, causing hiccups

FROM PAGE 1

March 1st on the birth certificate. She had a choice. They tried to get her to change it.” Being twins put a unique spin on celebrating their Feb. 29 birthdays growing up. Blais was born first, so on the off years she celebrated her day on Feb. 28, and Mattson celebrated hers on March 1. The family literally threw two parties two days in a row with friends and family over for each girl’s favorite meal and their own cakes. “That’s why we preferred non-leap years,” Blais said. “(Being twins) we shared everything – clothes, bedroom, every occasion – so when it wasn’t a leap year, we actually got one day to ourselves!”

SCHOOL DAYS BROUGHT FUN

Olson didn’t recall any unusual incidents during his school days in the 1940s and ’50s, except that “when the 29th would come around, why, then in grade school the teachers always did something a little special. I remember that,” he said. Keech said an English teacher brought in a cake for him when he was a sophomore in high school. “She didn’t do that for any of the other students,” he recalled. “She said, ‘We’re going to celebrate this because you don’t get a birthday every year.’ She made me feel really special.” Twins Blais and Mattson didn’t recall special treatment in school except their birthdays being easily remembered. “I felt it was my job to inform all my classmates in every grade what leap year is,” Blais said with a laugh. It must have worked because sis Mattson said no one forgot their birthdays. “I remember someone calling and leaving a voicemail, ‘My milk carton expired on 2-29 so I remembered it was your birthday and thought I’d call,’” she said.

NOT ALL ROSES FOR LEAPERS

The leapers all agreed there are difficulties that come with having a birth date that isn’t on the calendar every year – and technology is at the root of many of them. “There are some websites when you’re trying to fill out a questionnaire that don’t have Feb. 29 listed,” Keech said, “and you’re like, ‘Okay, what do I do? Do I embellish and say I’m on the 28th or March 1st?’” Mattson agreed. “When the security question comes up, ‘What’s your birthday?’” she said, “You wonder, ‘Do you guys allow leap year or not?’” She’s gotten used to seeing “Invalid Date” come up when she tries to enter her birth date on all kinds of online applications.

“Sometimes you have to put the year first, then it’ll take it,” she said, “but a lot of times it won’t even take it.” Aside from the technological headaches, the leapers get a kick out of how many human beings won’t accept their birth date either.

“You’d be surprised how many people don’t even know about (leap year),” Mattson said. “One guy in a bar thought I had a fake ID. Like I’d pick a non-date for a fake ID? I’m not that dumb.”

Olson remembers a time at the courthouse when he was fixing a problem with his birth certificate and the young woman behind the counter said, “You couldn’t have been born on the 29th because there’s only 28 days in February!” “I showed her my driver’s license” he said, “and then she believed me.”

Keech has had the same experience. He said, “I have on a number of occasions had people look at my driver’s license and say, ‘Wait, what? How are you–? Never mind.’”

IT’S GOOD TO BE A LEAPER

Even in a world of “Invalid Dates” and questioning looks, the leapers know they’ve got it made in many respects.



CONTRIBUTED

Nathan Keech blows out the candles at his 10th (40th) birthday party held in a train car at St. Paul’s Jackson Street Roundhouse. His wife planned a surprise party with a train theme.

“I get offered free drinks or birthday cake and things like that,” Keech said. “I have had people buy my meal or do something out of the ordinary because they’re like, ‘You don’t get to celebrate very often.’”

The sisters are unashamed of creating their own leap day culture of privilege.

“We celebrate all month long,” Blais said, laughing. “It’s just a really good excuse to do whatever we want.”

Mattson added, “In our minds we’ve waited four years every year ... we just keep celebratin’ even after it’s over.”

It isn’t Olson’s style to make the day all about himself, but he was coaxed into trying it back in the 1980s by the only other person he knew who shared a leap day birthday – an older guy at his church.

Olson recalled, “One year Jerry said, ‘The 28th is coming up again, why don’t we just tell people that we really feel bad that we don’t have a birthday on the real 29th this year? If we make people feel sorry for us,

we’ll probably get a few more gifts.’”

On March 1st Olson called him to see how the plan worked.

“(Jerry) said, ‘It fell through completely,’” Olson recalled. “All I got was two pair of socks, two ties – and I don’t wear ties – and a pair of polka-dot boxer shorts!’ So we both laughed and I said, ‘Jer, that’s probably exactly what you deserved.’”

IT’S NOT ABOUT THE DATE

Not every leaper will have his bluff called when he tries to milk the leap-year system. Family members and friends seem to genuinely enjoy giving the leapers a little something extra to make up for their annual hardships.

“The most memorable birthday was when I turned 40,” Keech said, “and my wife, Amber, surprised me. ... It would have been my ‘10th’ birthday, so we went to the Jackson Street Roundhouse in St. Paul because she knows I love

LEAP YEAR FACTS

Leap days were created because it takes roughly 365 and one-quarter days for the earth to travel around the sun. To counteract the accumulation of those quarter days, one day was added to the Gregorian calendar every four years.

A person born on Feb. 29 may be called a leaper, a leapling, leapster or leap-year baby.

The chance of being born on any given day is 1 in 365. But for leap babies, it’s four times that, plus an extra day or 1 in 1,461.

About 4.8 million people are leapers out of the nearly 7.5 billion people in the world or .07% of the population.

In the U.S., that’s only about 205,000 people out of 327 million.

Being born on Leap Day is actually rarer than being born with 11 fingers and toes (odds are 1 in 500).

trains. There was a Thomas the Tank Engine there. It was playing off that 10-year-old’s fantasy thing, but with big boy trains and steam engines.”

The twins also give their parties a leap-year-age theme, they said. Since they’re turning 9 this year, they’re looking at having a SpongeBob Square Pants cake and Nerf gun wars.

Olson is keeping his 20th birthday low-key, but has advice for others.

“If you have a leap year birthday,” he said, “just enjoy it. Consider yourself a little bit special.”

Keech said his Feb. 29 birth date has been “a fun thing” through the years, but his feelings have matured as he nears his 12th birthday.

“Birthdays are not necessarily about the gifts,” he said, “but about the friendships. It’s an excuse to get friends close together in one location at least one time every four years and spend time together and celebrate.”



Aaron Berg



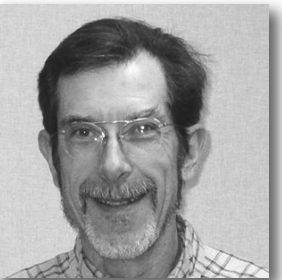
Jessica Kluck



David Redfield



Jeff Andres



Jeff Soderquist



Mark Ziebarth

New faces take places on Cambridge commissions

CONTRIBUTED
CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

The Cambridge City Council appoints members to the Planning Commission and the Parks, Trails and Recreation Commission each year. A commissioner’s term is typically three (3) years, and they can serve for no more than nine consecutive years.

PLANNING COMMISSION

In 2020, the city council appointed Aaron Berg, Jessica Kluck and David Redfield to the Planning Commission. Berg has experience with other civic activities including serving on the Cambridge-Isanti School Board, formerly on the Cambridge Police Reserves and volunteering at the Cambridge Surplus food distribution. Kluck has volunteered as a fast-pitch coach, served

on the school district’s PTO, the Parent and Teaching Learning Advisory, volunteers at the schools, and has Leadership Academy training.

Redfield has served as a National Guardsman, on the Legion Post 473 and Parade Honor Guard, and on the St. Cloud Fire and Police Pipe and Drum band.

PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

The city’s new Parks, Trails and Recreation Commissioners for 2020 are Jeff Andres, Jeff Soderquist and Mark Ziebarth (as the Cambridge-Isanti school district representative).

Andres has past civic experience including Cambridge-Isanti baseball, football and basketball, Boy Scouts, and volunteering for the Chamber of Commerce.

Soderquist brings with him involvement in Cambridge-Isanti youth baseball and hockey, as an American Legion member, and Isanti County Beyond the

Yellow Ribbon.

Ziebarth has served as the Parks, Trails and Recreation Commission school district representative since 2014, has been a past City Council member, a member of the Rotary Club of Cambridge and the Cambridge Masonic Lodge.

Applications for open Commission seats are typically taken in November/December each year. The open positions are posted on the city’s Facebook page, website and the city’s legal newspaper.

Keep an eye out for these postings or call City Hall at 763-689-3211 if you are interested in serving in this capacity.

The City’s official Facebook page can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/cityofcambridgeminnesota>.

For more information on the commissions and their members, visit the city’s website at <https://www.ci.cambridge.mn.us>.