

Leap year steeped in tradition and superstition

By Ronald Wolf
For Inter Tribal Times

Did you know that 2008 is a Leap Year? Well, most people don't know and even fewer people really know what the 29th of February is all about.

So, let's get to it. The original Roman 355 day calendar had an extra 22-day month every few years to maintain the correct seasonal changes. By the time Julius Caesar took reign, the seasons no longer occurred during the same months they once had. This was

remedied in 45 B.C. by removing the extra month and adding the extra day to a few months instead. Julius Caesar proclaimed the last day of February as Leap Year Day, skipping it three out of four years. Back then, February 30th was the last day of the last month of the year, which is why he picked it. Julius also threw in a month in honour of himself (Julius - July).

So that the history of the day is out of the way, we can get to the fun facts of the day. The day is steeped in traditions and superstitions. According to English law,

February 29th was ignored and had no legal status. Folks assumed that traditions would also have no status on that day. It was also reasoned that since the leap year day existed to fix a problem in the calendar. There is a Greek superstition that claims couples have bad luck if they marry during a leap year. Apparently one in five engaged couples in Greece will avoid planning their wedding during a leap year. Famous people throughout history have celebrated their birthdays on Feb. 29. Here are only a few of them. Superman

is a Leap Day Baby. Since he is a comic book character he can have whatever birthday his creator decides to give him. An article in TIME magazine, March 14 1988, proclaimed Superman to be born on February 29. Realistically, there is no way anyone can be 50 'years' old on February 29, of any Leap Year. They would have to be 48 or 52. And, if someone did turn 50 'Leap Years' old on February 29, 1988, they would have been born in 1784. Ann Lee (1736-1784) of Manchester England, founded the Shaker movement and brought

it to America in 1776. John Phillip Holland (1828-1840) of Ireland designed and built the first submarine for the U.S. Navy. Herman Hollerith (1860-1929) invented the first electric tabulating machine (calcutaor). Adolph Blaine Charles David Earl Frederick Gerald Hubert Irvin John Kenneth Lloyd Martin Nero Oliver Paul Quincy Randolph Sherman Thomas Uncas Victor William Xerxes Yancy Zeus Wolfeschlegelsteinhausenberdorft Sr., Germany; had a Christian name for every letter in the alphabet.