

Leap year offer:

Are you busy the rest of your life?

For liberated American women, the calendar's most sexist holiday is Feb. 29.

In fact, unmarried women may feel offended throughout this entire leap year of 1968 by the old legend proclaiming that only for these 12 months do they have the right to pop the question to any eligible man.

Some forthright women admit to artificial ways of making the husband-to-be think getting married was all his idea, or admit to suggesting the idea themselves, leap year or not.

And many don't wait for anybody to ask. Last year there were at least 1,137,000 unmarried couples living together in the United States, a 117-percent increase since 1970. So says the Bureau of the Census.

WANTED or not, the "Leap Year Edge" has had the jump on unmarried men for 538 years, sometimes pouncing on the unwilling with the full weight of the law.

It was in the year 1288 that the Scottish Parliament laid down the law as follows:

"It is statut and ordaint that for ilk yeare known as lepe yeare, ilk maiden lade, of bairn hiege and lowe estat, shall ha liberte to bespeke ye man she like."

The same sort of law was passed in France a few years later, and just before Columbus sailed for America, the Italian cities of Genoa and Florence added to their books.

By 1600 English common law also decreed that "As oft as lepe yeare doth retun ye lades have ye privileg of

making love to ye men, which they doe either by wordes or by looks, as to them seemeth proper."

However they popped the question, the ladies were at least assured they would be taken seriously by the objects of their affection.

The Scottish law warned: "Gif he refuses to take her to bee his wyf, he shall bee mulct in the sum of ane hundredty pundis. . . . He could escape being mulct only gif he was already married."

In old England, instead of being penalized ane hundredty pundis, a bachelor could strike a blow for men's liberation with the present of a silk gown. But any maiden lady of high estate who accepted payment this way, according to one legend, first had to "show her red petticoats."

In the England of 1860, Queen Victoria warned the bachelor holdouts of Her Majesty's Rifle Corps that if they didn't get married they would be persona non grata. The Queen was said to believe that the stability of married life would improve their marksmanship.

NO ONE knows for sure who first suggested leap year as hunting season on bachelors. Some fabes give credit to St. Patrick in the early fifth century when reportedly at least one admiring Irish colleen was awarded a silk gown by a reluctant admiree.

Women apparently laid no special claim to leap year when Julius Caesar invented it about 45 B.C. in the first attempt to straighten out the calendar and keep it in line with the seasons.

Caesar divided the year into 12 months totaling 365 days. However, the

earth takes about one-fourth of a day longer than that to orbit the sun. Caesar remedied the situation by adding an extra day to every fourth year, tacking it on the shortest month — February.

But that wasn't quite right either. After 128 years the calendar had eased one day ahead of the actual year. Eventually the calendar got so out of whack with time that, in 1582, Pope Gregory XIII tried to straighten things out with a new calendar.

THE POPE evened things up more accurately by adding the leap year day to century years, but only those divisible by four, such as the year 2000. With the Gregorian calendar, now used throughout the world, it takes 3,300 years to get a day ahead of time.

More recent modifications have narrowed the difference to one day in 20,000 years.

All this may be of little comfort to those with Feb. 29 as a birthday.

There will be 9,036 Americans born this Feb. 29, give or take a birth or two, according to the Natalty Branch of the National Center for Health Statistics of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

The new February 29th-ers will soon learn what it's like to watch the world pull ahead of them birthday by birthday. Says one son of leap year: "If I didn't celebrate my birthday early, on the 28th, I'd have to tell the kids that Daddy is only 9 years old."

People who get married on Feb. 29, however may be rewarded by an advantage. They'll only have to buy an anniversary present every fourth year.



MSU team documents past life

Two Michigan State University archaeologists are leading a team in a planned four-year project to document 19th century living in three Mississippi river towns.

Sites of the project are three "lost" towns on the Tombigbee River in the northeast section of Mississippi. The MSU-led team is based in the town of West Point.

Surveying of the former town sites is under way, preparatory to substantial "digs" designed to retrieve artifacts and document the lifestyle and economic and transportation systems of Colbert, Barton and Vinton.

CHARLES CLELAND, a curator at the MSU Museum, and **Lee Minnerly**, instructor in anthropology, are in charge of the project.

The historic archaeology project is one of the largest and most complex ever undertaken in the United States. It brings together the expertise of faculty and students in archaeology, history, oral history and archival fields at leading American universities.

A grant of \$446,000 from the U.S. Department of the Interior, to cover the first six months of field work, was accepted by the MSU Board of Trustees.

Funding is from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is engaged in the planning of a large outdoor recreation complex, with a marina and other boating facilities, on the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway.

Ms. Thoms to coordinate Bush effort in Oakland

Margaret Thoms of Birmingham will coordinate the George Bush presidential campaign in Oakland County.

Bush, of Texas, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, is one of seven candidates seeking the Republican presidential nomination.

Mrs. Thoms is a member of the State Board of Medicine which oversees the medical profession in Michigan. She's a second-term appointee of Gov. William Milliken.

Active in Republican politics for 20 years, Mrs. Thoms was appointed county chair by Loret Ruppe, state chairman for Bush.

Co-chairman of the Bush 18th Congressional District committee are Karen Carmel of Troy and Geoffrey Davis of Royal Oak.

Heading the 19th District effort are Ellen Mulvihill Templin of Bloomfield Township and John Calandro, of Northville.

FREE
One custom-tailored shirt when you buy four.

Shirts from \$24.
DURU'S
CUSTOM SHIRTS & SUITS
DETROIT, MICH.
Fisher Building
Columbus Plaza 9
871-6638
Mon.-Fri. 9:30-5:00
BIRMINGHAM, MICH.
725 Adams Rd.
S. Adams Square Arcade
842-9902
Mon.-Fri. 9:30-5:30

Today is the first day of the rest of your life.
Give blood,
so it can be the first day of somebody else's, too.

Red Cross is counting on you.

petites in the flared skirt suit
the newest suit look of all, now perfectly proportioned to your size. Crisp and debonair in navy gabardine with a great fit to the brief belted jacket, a lot of flare to the dimidi skirt.
By Young Impressions in polyester for petite sizes 6 to 14, for the 5' 4" and under figure, 134.00
At Lord & Taylor, Fairlane—call 336-3100;
Lakeside—call 247-4500;
Twelve Oaks—call 348-3400.
All open daily 10 to 9, Sunday 12 to 5.

PRIVATE LESSONS ON ALL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS
HAMMELL MUSIC
Middlebelt Rd.
between 5 & 6 Mile
427-6040

The door to Spring Fashion opens March 20th!

Johanna didn't come home from school today.
And the clues to her whereabouts are few and frightening. The only thing the police know for sure is that four little children are already dead. Little blond children...walking in the snow.
Angel in the Snow
A novel by Patricia Welles
POCKET BOOKS
Wherever paperbacks are sold.