

Leap day birthday something to celebrate

Written by Darci Tomky

Feb. 29 might just be an extra day for most people, but it's an extra special occasion for one Holyoke resident.

Lawana Browning celebrated her 19th birthday Wednesday, Feb. 29. Although she loves having a unique birthday, her mom was not so excited about having her daughter born on leap day.

On Feb. 29, 1936, Marjorie Boller planned to deliver her daughter at her home on a farm outside of Holyoke. Cleverly, she stopped all the clocks in the house, so the baby wouldn't have to be born on leap day, but could instead claim a Feb. 28 birthday.

The delivery didn't go quite as planned. Dr. Portia Lubchenco ended up delivering the little girl at the hospital in Haxtun, recording the birth date as Feb. 29.



Leap day baby Lawana Browning (front center) poses with her family—father Lloyd, mother Marjorie and brother Marvin Boller.

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“They were superstitious I guess,” said Browning of her parents, noting she would have felt just a little bit cheated if her parents would have caused her to miss out on her leap day birthday honors.

This leap year baby grew up on her parents’ farm, attending the Lakeside and Owens country schools, then graduating from Phillips County High School in Holyoke in 1953.

She married her husband George Browning in January of 1957. Residing in Holyoke most of her married life, Browning spent 30 years working at the gas company and 10 years at the elevator during harvest.



George and Lawana Browning are pictured a few years ago for their 50th wedding anniversary.

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Browning has two children, four grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. She's kept busy in retirement with her role on the alumni committee as well as trips to Mexico at Christmastime and to Las Vegas for the rodeo.

Browning grew up not knowing anyone else who shared her unique birthday. She makes the most of it, since it only comes every four years. Her family attended an Avalanche game in Denver for her 18th birthday, and she even got surprised once with her picture in the Sterling newspaper.

This year, Browning got treated to a train ride to Grand Junction and some time with family just before her birthday this week.

Her husband laughed when he said leap day birthdays are great because he only has to buy presents every four years.

And when asked why she likes her Feb. 29 birthday, Browning simply grinned and replied, "I don't get very old."



Lawana Browning is pictured her

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senior year of high school in 1953.

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