

Shed Some Light on Daylight Savings

**By Reg P. Wydeven
November 12, 2011**

A few years ago, our family got up early on a Sunday morning and we made breakfast in bed and watched a Disney movie. Of course, the movie was longer than we thought so we had to scramble to get to church.

We showed up at about 10:02, hoping to sneak into the back pew unnoticed. However, as we approached the doors, parishioners started exiting the church. At first we thought we were in for a long sermon, but then we quickly realized that the crowd was coming from the 8:00 mass and we had totally forgotten about Daylight Savings Time.

Just like I do every fall, last week I forgot to turn our clocks back, despite the long tradition of Daylight Savings. The ritual of turning our clocks forward and backward is actually regulated by the federal government and has a rich history as old as our country.

While serving as U.S. ambassador to France in Paris, Benjamin Franklin wrote of being awakened at 6 a.m. and realizing, to his surprise, that the sun would rise far earlier than he usually did. The founding father who coined the phrase, "Early to bed and early to rise," was purportedly the first person to introduce the concept of daylight savings. He wrote a letter to a newspaper claiming we would save resources by rising with the sun, eliminating the need to burn as much midnight oil.

The concept really caught on during World War I. Germany was the first country to adopt daylight savings time to reduce artificial lighting and save coal for the war effort. Other warring nations soon followed suit. In 1918, the United States passed the Standard Time Act that standardized the yearly start and end of daylight savings time, however, states were not required to observe it.

The U.S. forced states to follow daylight saving time during World War II to save wartime resources. For the last half of the war, daylight savings time was observed year-round, so clocks were not set back in the fall.

After the war ended, normal daylight savings resumed, and was again voluntary for the states. Accordingly, Arizona, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Marianas Islands do not observe Daylight Savings Time.

In 1966, the Uniform Time Act was passed, giving the Department of Transportation the authority to oversee the time zones in the U.S. and regulate daylight savings time. The Act requires states that observe daylight savings to begin at 02:00 local time on the last Sunday in April and to end it at 02:00 local time on the last Sunday in October. The Act was amended in 1986 to move the start date to the first Sunday in April.

Thirty years later, President Bush signed into law the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which extended daylight savings time by four weeks beginning in 2007, so it now starts on the second Sunday in March and ends on the first Sunday in November.

Countless studies have been conducted to determine if daylight savings actually saves energy. Some researchers argue that the reduced use of artificial lighting does not make up for increased air conditioning use resulting from the extra hour of daylight.

If I get confused in Wisconsin, I really would have had trouble had I grown up in Indiana. The state is in two different time zones, and until it became mandatory in 2006, only some of the state's counties observed daylight savings while others did not. I'm glad the Hoosier state is finally enlightened.

This article originally appeared in the Appleton Post-Crescent newspaper and is reprinted with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. © 2011 McCarty Law LLP. All rights reserved.