

Community Comment – February, 29th, 2016

By Jon Sapper

Leap Year

Today is Leap Year. Shouldn't it be Leap Day? I'm not going to get into that circular discussion, but suffice it to say, there is a reason for Leap Year. It takes the Earth just a hair over 365 days to orbit the sun, but our calendar has just 365 days.....so, every so often we need to add leap seconds and leap days to make sure our clocks and calendars are in sync with the Earth and its seasons. It didn't always used to be that way, or so I found out after checking the Internet. I sure am glad Al Gore invented that thing.

A couple thousand years ago when Julius Caesar roamed the Earth, (pun intended) February had 30 days and August had only 29. The other months had either 30 or 31. But the next Emperor who came to power was Caesar Augustus and he had a bit of an ego. He decided that August should have 31 days to reflect the importance of his name. February came up on the short end of the stick, with 28 days. It would be interesting to see what the battle would look like if current day politicians were arguing about which months had how many days. Scientists say the Earth is rotating more slowly, about two thousandths of a second every day, and would probably completely stop rotating by the time our Federal Government could agree on a calendar that would serve the interests of those currently in power. Maybe we should be thankful they figured this out years ago. Scientists also say this Leap Year solution will only last for another 10,000 years or so because of the slowing down of the Earth's rotation. Oh great! Something else to worry about.

To keep this thing in check, experts say it is quote "crucial" to have leap seconds. This is to make sure that over time we don't end up having the middle of the day becoming the middle of the night. I have enough trouble sleeping, so I think I like these leap seconds.

Now there is lore around the traditions of Leap Year. One that got my attention was that to compensate for those men who are slow to propose marriage, women were allowed to do the asking on Leap Year. And in Denmark, or so the story goes, if a man refused the proposal, he had to give the woman 12 pairs of gloves. I mean, what does a guy say at that point..... Alright, alright, if it was

only 10 pair, I'd go ahead and give you the gloves, but 12 pair is too many, so I'll just marry you? And what about the women who really only want the gloves? If you run into that today, guys, fake 'em out and say, "Sure, I'll marry you, what do you think I'm going to do, buy you 12 pairs of gloves? Not worth it!

I'm sure thankful this thing only comes around every four years.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.