

SHELL SHOCKED

## LEAP YEAR

By Art Stevens

Yes, it happens every four years. It's called "Leap Year" and we benefit by getting an extra day tagged on at the end of February.

I have a friend whose birthday is February 29 and boy does he feel shortchanged. He attempts to celebrate it on February 28 but his friends and family aren't buying it. They refuse to acknowledge his birthday unless it's celebrated on February 29.

So even though my friend is approaching sixty he's only had about fifteen birthdays in his life. The question he's asked most often is "Are you fifteen years old or sixty years old? How old are you technically?"

I wouldn't want to be in his position. My annual birthday presents are my due. I earned them by having a birthday every year. But despite my good fortune, I've always wondered why they only put twenty-eight days in February to begin with while many months have as many as thirty-one days.

Why wouldn't they have removed the thirty-first day from, say, July or August and added them to February to give it thirty?

And why does there need to be a leap year that has one extra day? I'm led to believe that it has to do with the position of the sun, the axis of the earth and Barry Bonds' batting average. But why add that day to poor, undernourished February? Why couldn't there be a June 31, for example, if an extra day every four years is vital to our way of life?

Or why couldn't they spread it around—June 31 one year, November 31 another year, and even a March 32 yet another year? Why not make it totally unpredictable every four years so that it becomes one big surprise?

Of course, as of now, no one was ever born on June 31, November 31 or March 32. The downside is if we remove February 29 from the calendar starting immediately, my friend would never have a birthday again. Boy, would he blow a gasket.

"How can they do this to me? How can you take my birthday away from me and not replace it? It only comes once every four years as it is. Most people have one every year," he would lament.

But in this age of political correctness we would merely shrug and say that other months have the same rights as February. That they, too, deserve that extra day on our calendars every four years.