

from other pens...

Are we surprised by summer heat?

Why is it that the arrival of summer's heat always seems to come as a surprise? But each summer, the current one no exception, finds the media falling all over itself to let us know that, "we are in the midst of a heat wave!"

As if we didn't know. The words, "All up and down the East Coast..." Or, "In the Midwest, people are seeking..." Or, "Temperature extremes have engulfed..." The descriptions almost sound the same as the prior summer's. Or the summer before. Or the summer before that.

Heat and summer go hand in hand. That's no surprise. The surprise, however, would be if it didn't warm up! If it didn't get uncomfortably hot.

The words we welcome most during the heat of summer are "cold front." Weather people like to call a forecasted drop in temperature a cold front. But "cold" and "summer" don't quite go together. It's really a wind shift.

Why could they not call it a "cool front." That would make more sense.

We will get through this summer's heat wave just like we have done in the past. Yes, the heat causes some people to fall ill. Death is not rare in cases of extreme heat. Many communities make fans available to those in need. Some communities open air conditioned shelters to accommodate the public.

But it happens each summer It's no surprise. It's something we need to prepare for just as we prepare for the worst of winter.

Dress accordingly. Drink lots of water. Stay shaded when outdoors. The suggestions are many. More and more people are heeding the advice.

Some say the summer heat of 2006 could be a record-setter. That's possible.

But one thing is for certain: it's going to happen No surprise there.

— Tom Dreiling, *Norton Telegram*

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Higher security makes travel slower

I really thought the woman ahead of me was going to cry.

"My makeup?" she asked, holding a six-inch brown tube. "But that cost \$40."

"Can't go," the Transportation Security agent said.

The woman handed it to Cynthia, who was standing by the trash.

I thought we were clean. We'd turned on CNN in the morning. I'm not sure why. We don't usually have a television on.

So we knew about the arrests in London, the alleged plot to blow up a dozen transatlantic jetliners, the new rule about taking liquids onto airplanes.

When we got to the terminal in Denver, the curbside checking was jammed, 20 people in each line. Usually, there's two.

They all had that frantic look in their eye. They hadn't gotten here early enough.

First we thought we'd just check both bags, though we had planned to just take carryons for a two-day trip to Washington. But looking around, I said: "With 50-60 percent more checked bags than usual, they're going to lose a bunch of it. We need to take our clothes."

So while I stood in line, Cynthia rearranged



steve haynes

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our bags so we could pack one and check one. Almost as an afterthought, I patted my pocket and found my eye drops and my lip balm. Into the checked bag they went.

It got worse when we went inside. The security line for the bridge to Terminal A, usually the shortest, came out and around the balcony in the concourse. The lines on the floor snaked out into the baggage area. I was afraid to look.

I remembered that we could use the first-class line with my frequent flier card on Frontier. I knew all along it would be good for something.

That turned out to be a good idea. Friends who were supposed to be on the same flight missed it, standing in line in Denver.

So did repacking to take the suits in a carryon. A couple of people showed up for dinner — business formal — in shorts and T-shirts. Nobody seemed to mind, but you know

they were embarrassed.

Our checked bag did make it to D.C., and so did we. It could have been a lot worse.

As I got through the security line, I found I'd smuggled in a nearly-empty tube of lip balm. I turned to look for Cynthia, who was dumping her purse for a search.

Seems the X-ray had found a nail polish and lip gloss she'd forgotten. They let her go with a warning. They TSA reps had a whole basket full of stuff they'd taken off people — makeup, sunscreen, sodas.

One guy popped up with a wicked little grin. "Got any Pepsi?" he asked. "I'm thirsty."

At least someone could see the humor in the situation.

Not Cynthia, who was looking at the banana she had in her purse. At least they hadn't taken that.

"How much did that cost?" I asked. "\$20?"

"No, maybe \$10," she said. "Not much."

"Well," I said, "if you had a \$10 bill, you wouldn't just throw it away."

"If you're not careful," she said, "I'm going to show you what you can do with this banana."

I don't think she meant I was going to eat it, either.

GOP must raise minimum wage

Sometimes it's a close question as to whether the leaders of the House are more arrogant or more stupid. The combination of the two is deadly.

The arrogance stems from a deep-seated conviction that state-by-state gerrymandering has made it impossible for the Republican Party to lose the majority in the House. The stupidity is demonstrated by their refusal to take the two steps that could give their beleaguered members some kind of political cover as they run for reelection: lobbying reform and a minimum-wage increase.

But the arrogance is misplaced. The Republicans can, indeed, lose the House.

In the 2004 election, GOP congressional candidates polled three percentage points more than their Democratic opponents, but current polling suggests that the Democratic margin, this time, will be between eight and 12 points higher. If those numbers hold up — and Bush's low favorability virtually assures that they will — there is every reason to believe that the Republicans could lose control. Remember that there are seven GOP retirements in the House from marginal seats and that 16 incumbent Republicans were elected in 2004 with less than 55 percent of the vote.

In the Senate, the five endangered Republicans — Mike DeWine (Ohio), Jim Talent (Mo.), Rick Santorum (Pa.), Conrad Burns (Mont.) and Lincoln Chaffee (R.I.) — may go down as Bush's popularity hovers in the mid-30s. And relief is not likely as Democrats will probably win New Jersey and Washington state, blue states that they are. It may all come down to Tennessee in the Senate.

Given their slender electoral chances, the failure of the House and Senate to pass significant lobbying reform can only be explained by a colossal arrogance and a total, drug like dependence on lobbyist favors. But the minimum-wage bill?

Nothing could so permit Republican candidates to cut the ground out from under their Democratic opponents than to pass this seminal piece of liberal legislation. Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) did more to rescue the post-government-shutdown Republicans in 1996 when he let the last increase go through. The bill to raise the wage by \$2.10 over three years gives Republicans a solid accomplishment, demonstrating their concern for the working poor.

By defeating the increase — and even more by tying it to further estate-tax relief — the



dick morris

• commentary

Republicans give their Democratic opponents talking points with which to beat them over the head. No American will fail to see the heartlessness in denying hardworking people a wage of \$7, nor will they fail to understand the priorities of a party that will only grant this pittance to the poor if they can raise the estate-tax exemption to \$5 million!

What are they thinking in the House? A Democratic campaign strategist couldn't dream up a better linkage than that between the minimum wage and the estate-tax reduction. That the GOP is putting its own neck in that particular noose is a gift to the Democrats that they don't deserve.

In 1997, when the last minimum-wage increase took effect, we saw how specious was the GOP argument that a higher wage would deter employment, particularly of students. Unemployment dropped, unaffected by the

wage increase.

Many issues are tough to analyze and are too complex for the average voter, but the priority we should accord those making \$5 an hour over those who stand to inherit \$5 million is so clear that it can fit on a bumper sticker.

Republicans are trying to win the 2006 election the same way they won the 2004 election — by revivifying their base. But in 2004, Bush had approval regularly measured at over 50 percent, and usually over 60 percent. The threat of terrorism hung over the election like the shadow of the fallen World Trade Center.

Now they are trying to turn on their core voters with issues like gay marriage and flag burning. It won't work.

The Republicans have got to aim their pitch for swing voters, and there is no better way of doing that than raising the minimum wage — and discarding the linkage to estate-tax relief.

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