

Flying these days

"They are doing minor maintenance on the plane. As soon as I get the word everything's okay, we'll begin boarding."

No great shakes.

The flying public has become used to inconveniences so hearing that our plane needed some repairs was better heard in the terminal than over North Platte.

With many, if not most, airlines teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, if not already in the middle of it, passengers have to be concerned that an easy expense to reduce is maintenance. It is obvious that other expenses have been cut by having fewer in-flight employees and charging for everything short of the beverage.

My wife and I were waiting in Minneapolis-St. Paul for our return flight to Denver the other day when the above announcement was made in our gate area.

So, along with about 150 other passengers, we waited. It was to be a short wait.

"The plane is broke," the guy announced.

"We have another piece of equipment available (thankfully, Minneapolis is Northwest's home base) but you will have to proceed to Gate C-10."

Most readers probably aren't familiar with the Lindbergh Terminal at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. We were supposed to catch our plane at Gate G-11.

"G" as in the "Gold" concourse.

"C" must be for the "Canadian" concourse. It was approximately three miles away. One had to wonder why they didn't pull the non-functioning plane away from the gate (they would obviously have to tow it to a hangar for repairs) and bring the replacement plane to the passengers.

But, noooooo!

In a way, I was pleased, though. For those passengers who carry their closets on-board these days to avoid the \$15.00 a bag charge for checked luggage, they had to walk all the way up the "G" concourse, across the terminal (no, I didn't stop to see if Sen. Larry Craig was around) and through the "C" concourse to Gate 10.

Now, my wife and I are still in pretty good shape for a couple pushing fifty but there was this little old lady, she looked like Helen Hayes in the movie *Airplane*, who was struggling the sixteen miles we had to walk. She was supposed to be transported by wheelchair wherever she went but I think she was afraid she would miss the flight so she was walking - as fast as she could. As usual, I was walking ahead of my wife so she can watch for snipers to my rear, and she (my wife) generously offered to carry the lady's carry-on bag for her. Little did my wife know that the bag contained a blacksmith's anvil.

When we were within sight of our new gate, the lady was able to commandeer

a cart, which took her the final 50 yards.

At the gate, she leaned against the counter and they called for a wheelchair to board her. She had walked from St. Paul to Nova Scotia and they finally showed her some consideration.

Coming through security in Minneapolis, a new kid on the screen couldn't recognize something in my laptop computer bag. So, another officious character said he'd have to do a visual inspection.

Knock yourself out, Clouseau.

He asked me first, "Is there anything sharp in here?" I wanted to give him pause so I told him, "I don't think so." Why tell him "no?" I was going to carry the fudge I'd bought in Stillwater the day before but decided to put in my checked bag. Good thing, he might have poked his bony finger through the wrap and I'd had to discard the homemade candy. He had on protective plastic gloves like Mills Lane refereeing a heavyweight championship fight and he opened the side pockets of my bag. He withdrew an opened package of AA batteries and the mouse to my laptop. He also did some sort of "smear" to make sure I didn't have some explosives blended into the cheap bag, I guess, and thanked me for my patience.

I am careful what I write about TSA. Another newspaperman wrote derogatively and they put him on the "do not fly" list. So, just joking, fellows. Just kidding.

prez debate

I don't know how the October 7th debate between McCain and Obama came across on television because my wife and I listened to it on PBS radio on the trip from DIA back to Cheyenne that night.

Even my wife who can tolerate fools so much better than I (don't even say it), agreed that the candidates weren't answering the questions they were asked.

Question after question, much better inquiries than the likes of Gwen Ifill or Tom Brokaw could ever originate themselves, were not answered. At this point in the campaigns, it is more important not to stumble than to inform. Does anyone out there know just what John McCain's \$5,000.00 income tax credit for health insurance or his tax on the value of insurance provided by employers actually are? Does any reader understand how Obama can provide college for every kid who wants it and health insurance for every man, woman and child in the US, and then a tax cut for 95% of Americans?

Our country is up to its proverbial keisters in alligators and these guys still think the objective was to inventory alligators.

But, this debate will be remembered for the incredibly poor job done by Tom Brokaw. He whined more than the worst-behaved three year-old boy in the mall. Instead of controlling the timing, he whined that the boys weren't playing by the rules. Shut them off, then, Tom. Stop the damning whining. Retire for real. It's over, man. Your time is past.

