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## Long hot summer

This year Chicago had its hottest summer in years, as daily temperatures averaged 24.6° and daily highs 30.3°. In July the heat wave claimed the lives of more than 500 people--mostly elderly, debilitated, or afflicted with terminal illnesses. The tobacco manufacturers also took some heat as the American Medical Association urged congress to regulate the industry so that "the thousands who die from smoking each year will not be replaced by new smokers." Then the Food and Drug Administration, threatened with downsizing or even extinction, made antismoking its new cause and declared nicotine a drug of addiction, which caused house speaker Newt Gingrich to comment that the FDA had lost its mind. Later President Clinton declared teenage smoking a terrible problem and proposed to prohibit the sale of cigarettes to minors.

Meanwhile a consensus is developing that children's exposure to violence on television should be reduced, perhaps by installing electronic devices that allow parents to block out objectionable programs. Also harmful was the experience of a man in Florida who woke up from surgery to find that his wrong foot had been amputated. Researchers in Australia report that aluminum added to drinking water can accumulate in rats' brains, killing off neurons and causing memory loss. American investigators showed that the same results could be obtained in elderly people by a blow on the head of sufficient force to cause loss of consciousness, but only in those carrying the apo-E4 gene for Alzheimer's disease. In Chicago a man had his ear bitten off by a disgruntled former employee but had it temporarily reattached in the groin--an area where blood supply is profuse.

The census bureau reports that 22.6 million people, nearly one out of 11 US residents, were born in another country, 6.2 million in Mexico. More than one million Americans are in prison, and almost 4.9 million are under correctional supervision or on probation. The average life expectancy of Americans has now risen to 76 years; they are the "fluoride generation," and according to a dental professor need not lose their teeth, provided they take advantage of new dental hygiene products such as mouthwashes, medicated toothpastes, and tetracycline saturated fibers.

Each year 2782 postmen are bitten by dogs; and the post office has started a massive campaign, mailing 128 million postcards with warnings for dog owners to keep their dogs under control and with tips for potential victims to remain motionless, let the dogs sniff them, and avoid eye contact. In Chicago a jungle cat that bit a 2 year old girl so badly that she needed 200 stitches was ordered to be killed, but was saved by her owner taking her to another state. Another child, Baby Richard, has now been returned to his original parents, who, despite public indignation, will not allow him contact with his former adoptive parents. The US Senate has cancelled the 55 mile per hour national speed limit imposed since 1974. A Harvard study failed to show a link between silicone breast implants and autoimmune disease, but the lawyers are pressing on with their suits regardless. In Boston a doctor defibrillated himself in his office when he developed a tachyarrhythmia at 160 beats per minute. Republicans in Illinois complain that the city has spent over \$11 million to provide O'Hare airport with plastic sleeve toilet seat covers that are renewed by pressing a button after each use. Finally, Miami beach has installed a wheelchair ramp at the city's only nudist public beach, as required by the 1990 Disabilities Act.