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## North Korea a joke -- until it isn't

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It's easy to laugh off North Korea, with its mouse-that-roared nuclear ambitions and loopy supreme leader, Kim Jong Il, a weird Kewpie doll of a man with fright-wig hair and a zip-up jumpsuit.

Sure, North Korea snarls and blusters, but aren't their people starving? What kind of threat could such a marginal tin-pot nation really pose to the United States?

At this point in the conversation, I always feel duty bound to point out that nearly 37,000 Americans died fighting North Korea and their Chinese overlords between 1950 and 1953, and while the public might consider war with North Korea a hazy improbability, somebody must view them as a true threat, because the United States has maintained a military force in South Korea for the past 55 years -- 28,000 American troops are there now. The reason the United States refuses to sign all those treaties banning land mines endorsed by the rest of the civilized world is that we want a little extra something to slow up the North Koreans should they decide to pour across the 38th parallel again.

I'm sure they give the Korean War a half hour in 10th-grade world history, but it obviously doesn't stick, which is a shame, because if more people recalled the bloody, frozen, grinding stalemate we fought there before Eisenhower got the heck out, leaving some of our POWs in Chinese hands (the war was over by July 1953, seven months after Ike was sworn in. Imagine how the chickenhawks would howl if Obama did anything like that in Iraq).

Remembering this kind of stuff is seen as somewhere between pointy-headed trivia and weepy patriotic nostalgia -- also a shame, because North Korea is one problem we minimize at our peril. My guess is that Lora Hunt is sorry that she admitted to police that she was painting her nails when she drove her Chevy Impala last May into Anita Zaffke, who was sitting on her motorcycle at a Wauconda intersection, killing her.

Then again, there was nail polish splattered on the airbag, so they probably would have figured it out anyway.

Now polishing your nails is a particularly brainless form of vehicular inattention, one that might spur prosecutors to go after Hunt with more vigilance than had she been, oh, yacking on a cell phone to her manicurist.

But in truth, inattention is inattention, and whether you are doing your make-up or routing through the glove compartment shouldn't matter. We all do it, at one point or another, and it's an open question whether an ordinary lapse should become a major crime if something really bad happens because of it.

Joseph C. Cox was looking for an unlit cigar on the floor of his gray 2002 Chevy Impala last Nov. 18 when he plowed his car into the back of John Miller's Ford Contour, stopped due to a blown out front tire in the curb lane of southbound Naperville Road.

Cox was driving 55 miles per hour and never touched his brakes.

Miller's son, Adam, 5, was airlifted to Children's Memorial Hospital, where he was pronounced brain dead.

Racing to the hospital, Cheryl Miller phoned the wife of the rabbi who runs the Chabad Hebrew School, where her "beautiful little boy" attended kindergarten. Adam Miller had never missed a day at school, and now she had to tell them he wasn't going to be there tomorrow, or ever again.

The school was run by the Chabad Jewish Center of Naperville, and as is their practice during traumatic times, they dispatched black hats to the hospital. Just as the doctors were suggesting she consider donating the boy's organs, Lubavitchers were urging the Millers not to, because it

would be a violation of Orthodox Judaism, which says a body must be kept intact.

"I was tortured by rabbis," Cheryl Miller said. "Well-meaning people tortured me, saying such well-meaning things to me like, 'His heart is still beating,' and 'There's still a soul in his body.' 'It would be akin to killing him.' I went through hell."

While there is no question that the Lubavitch can be insistent, that seemed to lack the human decency I've come to expect from Chabad.

"My heart goes out to her, it was a very, very traumatic thing," said Rabbi Daniel Moscovitz, regional director of Chabad in Illinois. "The rabbi she deals with asked another rabbi to go over to help. He's very compassionate, and I'm sure he tried the best he can."

Is the sect against organ transplantation?

"It's not a simple thing, it's not the transplant, it's the definition of life of the organ donor," said Moscovitz. "There's a big, big controversy. I think it's important that everybody become more educated about these issues."

Despite being educated, the Millers ended up donating Adam's organs.

"The choice was either wait for our son to die, or try to help as many people as we could," said Miller. "I didn't feel there was a question. And if you have the choice to help somebody? I knew in my heart it was the right thing to do. They could have sent 100 rabbis."

Two sick people received Adam Miller's organs, and a new chance at life. That's morality as I understand it, even though traditional religion can lag on these things.

*Why is it when we talk to God we're said to be praying, but when God talks to us, we're schizophrenic?*

*Lily Tomlin*

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