

Bridge to China

He's got a winning personality, a wife who's a famous singer, a taste for Hollywood movies, a daughter at Harvard and fond memories of a 1985 stay with a family in Muscatine, Iowa. Xi Jinping, the vice president and heir apparent to the top government position in China, is not the prototypical Chinese leader.

He handled himself creditably on his trip to the United States, even sitting through a trial many Americans are familiar with – a long-winded oral presentation by Vice President Joe Biden, who pointedly complained about China's intellectual property policies and human rights record.

He didn't take offense at demonstrators protesting his regime's treatment of Tibet. He returned to Muscatine, where he said, "Coming here is really like coming back to home."

All this makes him look like someone who will be more amenable to U.S. concerns, but we shouldn't expect too much. Xi is a shrewd Communist Party functionary who can be expected to do nothing unless it serves the interests of his government. Personal compatibility may help smooth relations between nations, but only if the edges aren't too rough to start with.

More important is his background. His father, a revolutionary leader, had the grim experience of being purged and sent to a labor camp for 16 years, and the son was exiled to the countryside as part of the insanity of the Cultural Revolution.

The elder Xi, reports *The New York Times*, was "instrumental in initiating China's economic reforms, backed many of his progressive contemporaries and reportedly disagreed with the violent suppression of student protesters in Tiananmen Square in 1989." If the son follows a similar course, it bodes well for political reform and liberalization, which are long overdue.

The more pressing issue is what course Xi will take in dealing with his neighbors and the United States. China has embarked on an ambitious military buildup, and it takes a hard line on Tibet and Taiwan. There is no doubt Beijing is willing to go to war if necessary to prevent any disadvantageous change in the status quo in either place.

It also has disputes with other East Asian nations over various islands in the South China Sea. As China grows in wealth and military capacity, it could be a menace to its smaller neighbors.

Here, the crucial thing is for Washington to leave no doubt of its resolve to remain a Pacific power – intent not on picking fights with Beijing but with preserving a regional order that has fostered peace and growth.

President Barack Obama's announcement last year that the U.S. will station 2,500 Marines in Australia as part of a long-term commitment to the Pacific sent a useful signal to anyone who feared – or sought – a military vacuum in the region. It clearly stirred resentment in the Chinese government but doubtless came as a relief to allies.

We hope the talks between Obama and Xi gave the Chinese leader a better understanding of American goals and how they further the interests of China. An East Asia with a strong American presence is a stable East Asia, where the Chinese can pursue their own legitimate ambitions without provoking panic in nearby nations. China may actually enjoy greater freedom to operate, not less, if the U.S. continues to play a major role.

China also has an interest in responding to outside complaints about rampant intellectual piracy and trade restrictions. Last month, it got a stinging rebuke from the World Trade Organization, which ruled against its export limits on certain important raw materials. Beijing expressed regret but said it would abide by the ruling.

The two countries may never see eye-to-eye on many significant matters involving commercial relations as well as security. But if both can focus on the interests they have in common, they can limit their competition and contention to peaceful arenas. Xi's visit should be a step in that direction.

ARTIST'S VIEW



POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

Stop texting while driving

Of all the many statistics being used to highlight the dangers of distracted driving – in other words, driving while talking or texting on a cellphone, or even now, unbelievably, browsing the Web on a smartphone – maybe this one drives the point home most of all: police officers in New York state have issued 118,757 tickets since July 2011 for using an electronic handheld device while driving.

That's according to the Cuomo administration, which recently released the latest data on the same day that the Senate Transportation Committee held a public hearing on the issue in Albany. It's more than enough to confirm the concern raised by many transportation safety experts that distracted driving has become an epidemic across the nation.

"These numbers speak for themselves," said State Police Superintendent Joseph D'Amico, who testified at the Senate hearing.

And the numbers remain striking despite New York state having one of the strongest anti-distracted-driving laws in America. Last year the Legislature overwhelmingly approved and Governor Cuomo signed into law legislation strengthening New York's laws by elevating text messaging while driving from a secondary to a primary violation, making it allowable for police officers to stop drivers texting while driving without the requirement of another, "predicate" offense being committed. The penalties for using a

cellphone while driving were also increased from two to three points on a driver's license.

At our recent Senate hearing, we heard testimony from National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Vice Chairman Christopher Hart who stressed that research shows the "increasing use" of handheld devices by motorists. Ticketing has skyrocketed, many argue, but there's no corresponding drop in distracted drivers.

The purpose of the recent Senate hearing was to explore if enforcement of New York's current anti-distracted-driving laws can be enhanced, how to improve educational efforts, and if current driver education curriculums can do a better job of reaching young drivers.

Why the alarm? Federal data shows 16,000 deaths nationwide due to texting while driving. Other studies have shown that drivers are 23 percent more likely to be involved in an accident while text messaging. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 15 people are killed and over 1,200 people injured every day in distracted driving crashes. How about this one: a driver who's texting takes his or her eyes off the road for at least five seconds. Traveling at 55 miles per hour, that's enough time to drive the length of a football field without paying attention to the road ahead – and plenty of time to cross into the path of an oncoming vehicle.

But no black-and-white statistic can match personal testimony like the testimony we heard at

our recent hearing from a young woman named Jacy Good. In 2008, on the day of her college graduation, she and her parents were hit by an 18-year-old driver who ran a red light while talking on a cell phone. Her parents were killed. Jacy was seriously injured. She's lost the use of one arm.

"I was in a coma for my parents' funeral. I didn't get to go," Jacy said in her powerful testimony before the Senate. As Jacy's recovered, she's become a national spokesperson in the effort to prevent distracted driving. Her story is heart-breaking. But it's helping to save other lives.

As a result of last year's law, the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) now includes additional training for new drivers as part of the enhanced effort to deter distracted driving. The DMV, in partnership with the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, provides educational resources for parents and teens to help them understand the danger, which you can find online at: <http://www.safeny.ny.gov/phon-ndx.htm>

Talking and texting behind the wheel is a tragedy waiting to happen. It's one of the most dangerous pitfalls of this age of technology.

Right now we can only hope that the tougher laws, stricter enforcement and better education will help restore some common sense and safety to New York's roadways – and save lives.

■ **Tom O'Mara is a Republican state senator from Big Flats.**

A match not made in heaven

My dear readers, I owe you an apology.

Last summer, we made some changes to your newspaper. One of those changes – moving the comics into the sports section – has created marital discord.

Seriously. Our decision to pair *Blondie* with basketball was no laughing matter. According to the emails, letters and phone calls I have received, couples are fighting over the sports (B)

section in the morning. One person wants to read the funnies, the other the high school sports scores, and that's that.

Now I'm not a marriage counselor, but I tried to work with couples to find a solution that makes breakfast more pleasant. I've suggested one person reads another section while the other enjoys the sports/comics, but that raised the question of who would get the B section first. A proposal that couples take turns – one person gets it first on Monday, the other on Tuesday, etc. – didn't work, either. Nor did my idea to divide up the section. When it comes to the B section, it's all ... or nothing.

My idea to one caller that he and the missus flip a coin each day was met with dead silence.

Really. I'm not making this up.

Couples who can agree to compromise on life's biggest issues – how to raise the children, which car to buy, where to vacation, what movie to go see – are unable to find a workable solution on reading *The Leader's* B section.

So readers, there is only one thing left to do that will – hopefully – prevent more marriages from falling apart, or at least keep Pop Tarts from being thrown in anger:

Starting Monday, the comics page will no longer be in the sports section.

Blondie, *LuAnn* and *Beetle Bailey* are moving to the C section, after the Advice page.

The sports section will contain sports. ONLY sports.

Now everyone, kiss and make up. Please.

...

Since we are moving the comics page to the C section, we're having to make other changes as well. Here is a cheat sheet. This should cut down on any confusion Monday and get you off to a good start for the day.

Where is ...?

A section	
1A	News
2A-3A	Local, region
4A	Edit
5A	Nation, world
6A	Stocks
7A	Obituaries
8A	News, weather

B section
Sports, and only sports

C section*	
1C	Features
2C	Features
3C	Advice
4C	Comics!
5C, plus	Classifieds

• The **Food** section will now run on Thursday.

• **Lifestyles** will run Sunday and Tuesday.

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POSTAL RATES

STEUBEN COUNTY	ELSEWHERE IN USA
One month \$28.60	One month \$36.85
Three months \$85.80	Three months \$110.55
Six months \$171.60	Six months \$221.10
One year \$308.88	One year \$397.98

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Add pledge to the agenda

TO THE EDITOR | Prior to the meeting at the Village of Painted Post on Feb. 13, Anthony Savino placed American flags at the Board Members' locations. Mr. Savino also passed out flags to all the attendees.

The Mayor Roswell Crozier called the meeting to order. I saw the agenda in advance and the Pledge of Allegiance was not listed in accordance to public meeting protocols.

After the mayor called the meeting to order, I stood up quickly and started out saying "The Pledge." Most stood up to say the Pledge.

The business meeting was very short, less than 10 minutes. Anthony Savino stood up waiting to be recognized by the mayor. The mayor told Mr. Savino that he was not allowed to have the floor. Mr. Savino stated that "I am an American Citizen." The mayor announced that the public comment period is closed and that

the Board meeting was being reconvened. In a few moments, the mayor made a motion to close the meeting to enter into executive session.

I was asked by a board member "Where are you from?". I quickly responded that, "I am a citizen of the United States."

Next Village of Painted Post Board meeting will be March 12 at 7 p.m. Is the Pledge of Allegiance going to be on the agenda?

William J. Misnick Sr.
Corning