

# Random Notes

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*“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all,” Helen Keller*



*December, 2014*

## *A Year of Turmoil: Decisions*



The writer Thomas Wolfe was probably right. It is difficult to go home again.

We spent much of November in sunny Florida contemplating the future and considering possible life scenarios.

It was a nice respite from high anxiety. The weather was mostly great, the seafood scrumptious, and seeing old friends from my various walks of life was

both warmly nostalgic and invigorating

I visited my oldest daughter and my 93-year-old mother, and held a successful reception for my new novel, “The Legacy of Moon Pie Jefferson”. We talked to various high-flying PR agency executives in DC and Central Florida.

After three weeks, we reluctantly returned to gloomy skies over Ukraine, and to the danger of a full-scale war ever more present as the *Wizard of Odd* in the Kremlin moved more fire power into the violence-scarred east.

Today, an all out war is not something I would give odds against. In light of the current situation, we were forced to ask ourselves the question: Do we—as a family—really need this?

Do we need the 100 per cent devaluation of the currency since the last huge crisis of 2008? Do we need the specter of violent provocateurs prowling Kyiv’s downtown? Do we need a business climate that is barely survivable and currently at dead calm?

In other words, after two decades abroad, there was serious thought given to “*coming in from the cold*”—tossing in the towel, calling it quits and heading to the Promise Land of

Apple, Disney World, humongous malls, heart-stopping breakfasts and yes, thank god, Obamacare.

Having launched businesses in the US, Ukraine, Russia and Turkey, how difficult would it be to start over—even at my age when most are touring Yellowstone Park in giant RV's, and playing 18-holes of golf thrice a week.

The feeling passed, though not in the wink of an eye. It was a week-long continuing discussion and awakening, perhaps aided by the sun finally coming out over Ukraine. Hell, I don't even play golf.

I have a young family which makes my retirement age closer to that of my mother's age, and the fact is, I didn't accidentally draw my circumstances. I picked them; and thus have enjoyed the road less traveled.

By definition, I signed up for a risky journey, though Ukraine is probably more dicey than I envisioned or bargained for *20 years ago*. We have ridden the roller coaster of boom and bust. We have challenged the corrupt system and sometimes even won.

The fact is this: We live five minutes from Kyiv's Maidan, the epicenter of the revolution. We joined the protest on Day 1, and did what part we could for the revolution, as did countless others like us.

We invested in change, and in *Ukraine*. To abandon it now would be a comfortable challenge. But who needs comfort when history is being made, and you have an opportunity to have a small part in it.

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## *The Willard Reader*



**J**oe Parker, the serial killer, is returning. The faceless accountant who attempted to do away with his Facebook “friends” in my novel *“Killing Friends”* is coming back in a sequel titled “The Mean Old Man”.

This time, however, he is a little more inventive and a lot more diabolical. The mean old man in the book is an aging Central Florida reporter in an era of declining newspapers.

It's out the second quarter of 2015 from Vidalia House.

Meanwhile, I continue to flak “The Legacy of Moon Pie Jefferson”. It received a five star review on Amazon from Frank Lemkey:

He wrote:

*“A fascinating ‘who did it’ novel and the best yet from the pen of this emerging fiction novelist. Highly recommended as a fun read. To all who admired the late Senator Robert Byrd, the author's mentor, it has a unique historical context and message.”*

“Moon Pie”, “A Thief Wears A Burning Hat”, “Urainia: A Fable”, and “Killing Friends”, as well as the non-fiction “The Optimistic Alien”, are available from amazon.Com in soft cover or electronically.

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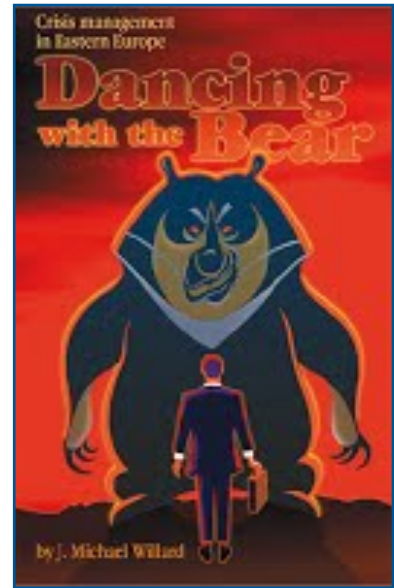
Let's face it. In Ukraine we live in a crisis environment. Particularly for FMCG companies, a crisis is a sun-coming-up occurrence.

I've specialized in crisis management and training for the last 22 *years*, working with such companies as Motorola, Shell, Philip Morris, Henkel, Danone, Lafarge, Kyivstar, and Nestle, to name a few.

Without a doubt, the Willard team of Michael and Olga Willard is the most experience group in the region offering crisis management and crisis simulations to prepare for an eventual crisis.

If you would like a copy of my book on crisis management, "*Dancing With the Bear: Crisis Management in Risky Markets*", send me an email, and I will see that it gets in your hands.

Willard also specializes in media training and public speaking coaching.



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## The Willard Round Table



Olga Willard, Armen Khachaturyan, Michael Willard, Ambassador Cliff Bond.

It was probably one of the more intense Willard Round Table discussions, lasting a record four hours and delving into such issues as the possible "worst case" scenarios in the current war situation.

The group also tackled such issues as the suspension of pension payments and banking activities in the separatist held areas, and the lack of international outrage over Russia's downing of Malaysian Airlines 17.

We were proud to have the following leaders in attendance:

Renato Ruszczyk, General Director, Lactalis Ukraine; Jock Mendoza-Wilson, Director of International and Investor Relations, SCM; George Logush, President, Kyiv School of Economics; Ambassador Cliff Bond, assistant coordinator of the U.S Embassy;



Jock Mendoza-Wilson, Ambassador Chuah Teong Ban, George Logush, Krzysztof Siedlecki.

Iryna Ryabchenko, family owner of Sofiyskiy Fitness Center; Armen Khachaturyan, Senior Partner, Asters Law firm; Alexander Scherba, Ukrainian Ambassador to Austria; Krzysztof Siedlecki, Managing Director, Astellas Ukraine; Alexei Kredisov, managing partner, E&Y; Polina Kredisova, Partner RLsailing; Chuah Teong Ban, Ambassador of Malaysia.

The next Willard Round Table will be in the *third Thursday in January*.

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## *International Women's Club of Kyiv*

**W**illard is the official public relations partner for IWCK's major fund-raising bazaar of the year which is being held Dec. 6 at 10.00 to 17.00.

Basically, this means we have volunteered to help with press relations, hold a mini-media training for speakers, and to make sure sufficient numbers of reporters covers this worthwhile event.

This is the second year we have served in this role, and are proud to take part in an event that raises money that helps orphanages, the elderly and displaced persons in this critical time of need.

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*Have a Happy Holiday,  
Michael Willard  
Chairman, Willard*

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