

Random Notes



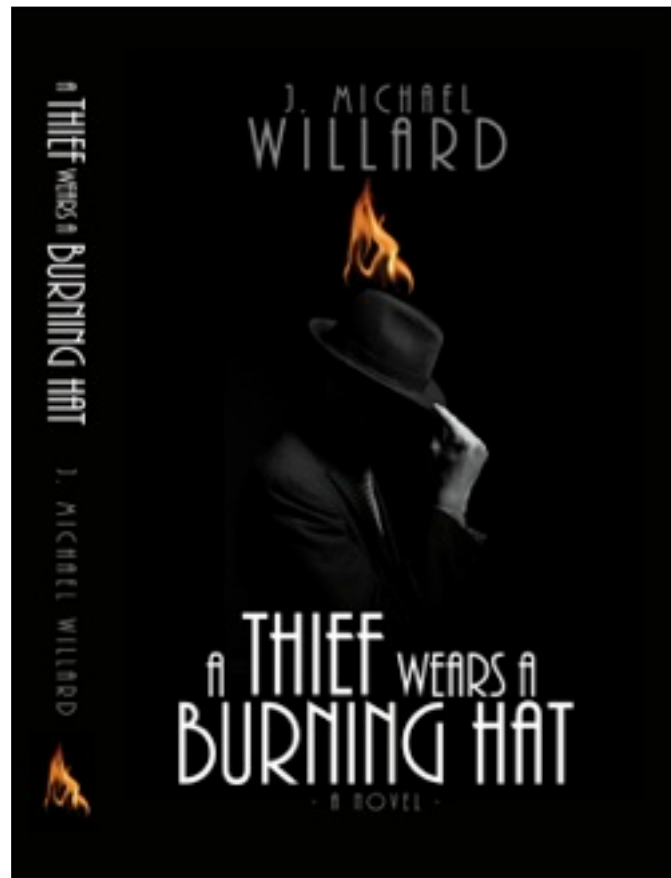
From the desk of Michael Willard, chairman of Willard International. Random Notes are written for a few special friends of Willard (the agency and the guy).

June, 2014

A Thief Wears a Burning Hat

If you happened to be in Kyiv in the wild and woolly 1990s, you will remember the Apollo restaurant with its whore house décor and the nightly shoot-em-ups on downtown streets by rival gangsters.

Well, that's the setting of my new novel "*A Thief Wears a Burning Hat*" which takes place in Kyiv, Crimea and Washington, D.C. Some of you will feel like it is old home week. All you need to do is toss in a corrupt USAID official, unsavory SBU types and a Tatar mafia chieftain who stepped from the pages of Casablanca.



But, every novel needs to have a hero, or at least an anti-hero. That's Jack McCartney, an aging, boozy, horny detective who just happens to have a knack for matching the modus operandi with the corpus delicti. The result is a roller coaster ride of a book through the Wild East.

"Thief" follows my "*Killing Friends*" and "*Urainia: A Fable*", all of which are available on Kindle or through Amazon. Buy a copy—on Kindle it's less than five bucks—and let me know what you think. <http://amzn.to/1ozpNK7>

You can read about all my books, my paintings, my recorded songs on my website, The Willard Reader, www.michaelwillard.org

Coming in 2015, “*The Legacy of Moon Pie Jefferson*”, a novel, and “Be the Best Speaker in the Room”, a book by Willard CEO Olga Willard and yours truly that is sure to put you at the front of the line when it comes to being an effective speaker and presenter.

Kyiv Post

I have a deep concern about the editors, reporters and photo journalists of the Kyiv Post who are putting their lives on the line each day in **Eastern Ukraine** to bring us an accurate, visual and compelling account of the bloody mess that Russia is causing.

Any day I expect to hear that one of my former colleagues has been injured. I admire their courage. They do what they do because they love it, and certainly not because of the money.

Which brings me to this: Where the heck is the international community in supporting the *Kyiv Post* by purchasing advertising? The newspaper is a great bastion of independent English language reporting and a community treasure.



Where are the multi-national agricultural and chemical companies that will benefit from a less corrupt Ukraine? Where are the fast moving consumer goods companies? Where are most of the entire list of EBA and AMCHAM members who should be lining up to advertise in this newspaper.

At one time, the Moscow Times was the *gold standard* of English language reporting in the region. That is no longer true. Today it is the *Kyiv Post*.

It has been a year since I left my position as CEO of the Kyiv Post. I have no vested interest other than as a reader of the publication. I will always remember my days at the Kyiv Post. A more dedicated staff there has never been. It really is in your interest to support it with advertising.

Taking Aim at “Universal Truths”

I mark my tenure in public relations/advertising/marketing from the first day I walked into the office of the man who was to become the leader of the *U.S. Senate*, and he put me in charge of communicating his public persona to the world. That was in late 1976.

During those decades, that which was common place, in my view, has changed because the world changed—primarily in technology having to do with the internet and instant communication. When I joined the wire service UPI in my 20s, the motto was “*a deadline every minute*”. Now it’s every second.

In my view, some of the changes:

Public Relations: I refuse to call it public relations. It doesn’t say what we do. I call it *Public Accountability*. It is not about spin and perception. It is about reality and truth. . It is about solving problems—and not putting another coat of polish on a problem. It has nothing to do with creating phony front organizations, which has become a staple of international PR firms. In Ukraine, it is also not about purchasing good press. That’s just for stupid and lazy PR people.

Gross Rating Points: Large companies and marketers still live and die with gross rating points to measure media effectiveness. That’s a fool’s gambit and has very little to do with making contact with your consumers. It is simply inefficient numbers. True, if you reach enough people, you will eventually sell more through awareness. But that’s like using a blunderbuss to go gnat hunting. Today it is not about waving at your consumer in the darkness of night, but tapping him on the shoulder, turning him around, and shaking his hand. GRPs doesn’t really measure this.

Focus Groups: A Focus Group is the equivalent of getting a group of people together on a street corner and asking their opinion. If you get 10 groups together with specific sets of demographics, you, perhaps, come up with some subjective answers—or maybe more questions. Too often in Ukraine, focus groups are used and the sole *determining factor* in choosing a strategy. This is what I call Russian roulette decision making. The main use of a focus group should be to define questions for an extended quantitative survey. I hang on the words of the ad great *David Ogilvy* who said too many marketers used research like a drunk hanging on to a lamp post. Focus Groups too often represent the lamp post.



The late Senate Democratic Leader Robert C. Byrd with a young Michael Willard

PowerPoint: PowerPoint was invented for people who couldn't memorize their own birth date or Social Security number and who couldn't put together two pieces of a two-piece Lego set. You need to be the *star of a presentation*, and not some silly software program. That's one thing we can do for you in a short time—wean you away from PowerPoint and put the focus back on you, your messages and your personality.

From time to time, I like to get these things off my chest.

Willard June Round Table



Olga Willard, CEO, Willard; Tatiana Spiridonova, president of Willard Advertising; Alexander Scherba, Ukraine ambassador at large; Iryna Ryabchenko, principal, Sofiyskiy Fitness Center; Michail Willard, Chairman, Willard.

Vladimir Lavrenchuk, Chairman, Raiffeisen Aval Bank and Natalie Jaresko, Founding Partner and CEO, Horizon Capital.

Euan MacDonald, editor Interfax, top-notch on-line chronicler of events in Ukraine; Stephan Wasylko, former U.S. Department of Commerce Foreign Service, extensive experience in region.

Bryan Disher, Managing Partner, PwC Ukraine; Michael Willard, Chairman, Willard.

Michael Willard

Facebook: Michael Willard, Kyiv, Ukraine

Twitter: @michaelwillard