

Random Notes

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



September, 2014

The Politics of Realpolitik



I am a dreamer. My novels all have happy endings, or relatively so. I believe Ukraine's dream of an independent, free and less corrupt society will come true. I believe it will stand in stark contrast to Russia where good people swim in a pool of evil.

I feel sorry for my Russian friends, some of whom are misguided, but most simply cowed by the Kremlin. The fact of life is this: *To be brave and outspoken in Russia means house arrest, at a minimum.*

Being optimistic does not mean someone like me is not a realist. Pragmatism comes with having gone around the block more times than famed stock car driver Richard Petty circled Darlington 500.

In my view, there are three things of which I am reasonably certain in the current war situation:

1. While one can be thankful Ukrainians are not dying as long as a cease fire holds, it is not a solution. It leads to another frozen zone and gives Vladimir Putin room for all sorts of mischief.

2. *The Lizard of Oz* in the Kremlin will never give up the Crimea he stole from Ukraine in his political lifetime, which is probably his total lifetime. There is no sanction that would force him into doing this.

3. Ukraine will not get into *NATO* for many years, though Russia is clumsily pushing Ukraine toward that direction. There are persuasive arguments why it should not be a member (and why it should), but the fact is this: *NATO* doesn't want Ukraine at this time. The prospect of overtly defending Ukraine against Russia makes Europe and the U.S. queasy.

Given these "*realpolitik*" thoughts, they should be top-of-the-mind in any discussions aimed at ending the war and the bloodshed.

As for Crimea—bound to be a Russian albatross--Ukraine should negotiate for payment for stolen property in exchange for basic amenities—mainly water—from Ukraine proper. However, such a deal should not be based on Russian energy. Ukraine, as it is with Europe, needs to be on the fast-track for energy independence, no matter how much it hurts.

Putin has loaded both barrels of a shotgun and shot himself in the foot. He thinks of Russia as a great power. Its economy is the size of California. Its output is \$2 trillion compared the G7's, \$35 trillion.

Economically, it's a puny country—and given the current missteps by the giant ego in the Kremlin—the nation is in a death spiral. This is not a prediction. It's just damn obvious.

Russia's punishment for aggression will be a lack of market for its only sizable industry, gas and oil, not to mention having lost a brother nation that choose democracy over tyranny. Also, those sanctions—great and small—should remain in place until hell freezes over or Putin is removed, whichever comes first.

The argument, of course, is that Putin will not stop at Crimea and, indeed, he has flooded both tanks and soldiers into the east.

I hate red lines, but this should be it.

The international community needs to realize that tribal conflicts in the Middle East are important—as is Israel's security—but stopping Russia from invading sovereign nations is the most vital decision the free world has faced in 70 years. Defensive weapons must be forthcoming from the West.

On the issue of federalization of the east, that should be off the table. No one needs another frozen zone, least of all the people within those poor, neglected areas of Transdniestria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia.

However, self-rule on regional domestic issues—such as electing local governors—is what democracy is all about.

It seems to me the obvious shouldn't be so elusive.

On Language: F-You, F-Off, and Other Pleasantries

Growing up, the F-word was for failure in school; and, on rare occasions, it was used as the absolute nuclear obscenity when other expletives seemed to have the impact of marshmallows against a wall.

Today, it is fairly well common in business, and in every walk of life. It's a solid Anglo-Saxon word made popular by leading ladies who appear in almost the same type of romantic comedies in which Doris Day and Debbie Reynolds acted in yesteryear.

Only they said, "*Aw, fudge.*"

Still, my squeamishness over the F-word is probably an age thing. I use it on occasion, though hardly ever with a lady around and never with children. It does populate my fictional books, however, like rabbits multiplying in a warren.

And I certainly thought it appropriate when a lovely lady showed up at a small Kyiv event with a tee-shirt which said: "F&*K Putin." But, as you can see, I am still reluctant to write the word for these notes.

Hang ups. Most of us have them. The word today has received institutional status and most likely is used by your blue-haired grandmother on occasion.

Some years ago former Vice President Dick Cheney uttered the expletive, I assume as an action verb, when he suggested on the U.S Senate floor, of all places, that Sen. Pat Leahy "F-off."

The Senate, for those of you who are not that familiar, is a place where people refer to one another with comity and superlatives, no matter how much they would like to put the other's head in a meat grinder.

As I grew in the newspaper/wire service business, I learned that the obscenity was one of the 20 or so basic words in the journalist's everyday language. I was certainly not immune to the culture.

Still, I am queasy about its general use. It has become so common the words are tossed out like confetti at a parade. Still, the word probably has more impact than those silly "emotion" icons some people use in emails and in social media.

Maybe the problem with those icons is that there is not enough emotional range and an *F-You icon* should be added. I have no idea which form it would take, or even color.

I would hope it wouldn't be too graphic.



Willard Round Table: Hard Talk

We think it is one of Ukraine's most interesting political salons. It has been around for 20 years, and it is called ***The Willard Round Table*** discussion and dinner.

It's an honest attempt to air potential solutions to difficult problems.

Attending this month were: Peter Dickinson, editor of Ukraine Today; Corrado Giaquinto, General Manager, Colgate-Palmolive Ukraine; Thomas Frellesen, Deputy head of the European Union delegation in Ukraine; Renato Ruszczyk, General Director, Lactalis Ukraine; Yana Mikhailova, Managing Director, Nestle Ukraine; Armen Khachaturyan, Senior partner, Asters law firm; Trond Moe, Group CFO at Mode; Krzysztof Siedlecki, Managing Director, Astellas Ukraine; Marek Wojtyna, General Manager, Danone Ukraine; Ambassador Alexander Scherba, Ukraine Foreign Ministry; Valeriy Zhaldak, advisor to Sergiy Taruta, governor of Donetsk Oblast.



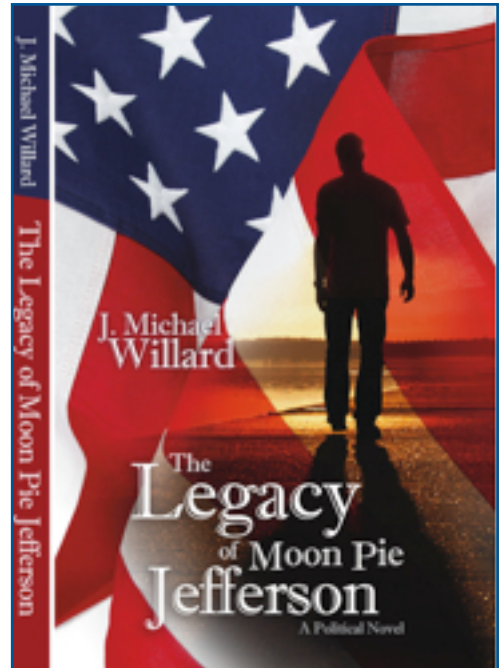
Yana Mikhailova, Marek Wojtyna, Renato Ruszczyk, Corrado Giaquinto, Thomas Frellesen, Krzysztof Siedlecki, Armen Khachaturyan, Valeriy Zhaldak, Michael Willard, Trond Moe, Olga Willard.

The Legacy of Moon Pie Jefferson

I want to call your attention to my new book, a political thriller about a U.S. Senator, a top aide, a pretty girl, and a detective with an attitude.

It's called the "*Legacy of Moon Pie Jefferson*" and it takes place in Washington, D.C., Ukraine and my home state of West Virginia.

It will be out on Amazon later this month. In November, I have a book tour in the United States to promote it.



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