

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).



April, 2014

The Lizard of Oz



Truth be known, I've never really liked Crimea as a vacation spot.

Accommodations for the non-Bentley driving set rank somewhere below Hitchcock's Bates Motel and service is almost always accompanied by a snarl.

That doesn't mean I feel ambivalent about being invaded. I feel—and I am usually more gentle in crafting words—royally pissed.

I feel so angry my temples throb when the gun-toting, “*green men*”, Mafioso thug leadership

denouement visits me like Banquo's ghost in the middle of the night. I want to do something about it, though I am a puny voice among other righteous and outraged expats reporting on Facebook.

What I really want is for my country, America, to DO something about the debacle, particularly with Russian rent-a-thugs mounting assaults on government buildings in Eastern Ukraine, and this slimy *Lizard of Oz* in the Kremlin manipulating Ukraine into what he obviously hopes will become a civil war.

I don't want the U.S. to draw an imaginary line in the sand. That time is past. I want it to blaze its intent in the sky so all can see and not back away from the commitment.

I want the U.S. to make sanctions so draconian that this current set of micro-waved apparatchiks can't purchase so much as a *Twinkie* outside Moscow; and that they are, indeed, forced to spend their vacations in Crimea and not on the French Riviera. Let

their spoiled wives shop in the Russian equivalent to the free world's Wal-Marts and not the boutiques of Rodeo Drive.

As for Europe, I want the leadership of the various countries to stop acting like timid little wait staff. Grow a backbone for heaven's sake. I want these things, not just for Ukraine. All should realize that Vladimir Putin wants to reconstitute the Evil Empire—though with more neon and flashing lights.

As for the Russian people who I love dearly and admire and many of whom I am fortunate to call friends, I want simply for them to wake up. That great, messy, exciting, turbulent but democratic country you had lasted less than a quarter century. So much hope and promise out the window. Do something about it. Reclaim your destiny.

Currently you are rotting from within. Great people cowed by *Kremlin-manufactured oligarchs* and drunk on the placebo of what you are told and think is stability. You are being reassured that violating territorial integrity makes you powerful. It doesn't. It makes you an isolated bully and pariah state.

You fought for freedom. Don't let it be taken away from you so easily by the little homophobe who has illusions of being a tough guy in the mold of the very bad actor Steven Seagal.

Gracious, even Steven Seagal is no Steven Seagal, and Putin is merely the slimy Lizard of Oz.

Political Fever Returns

For nearly 20 years, I have kept my political persona under wraps and have stayed pretty much away from politics. This, even though I earned my stripes as a reporter covering statehouse legislatures, and in the consulting field, working on *U.S. Senate and Congressional* campaigns, as well as dozens of statewide and local races in America's South.

I loved the amorphous nature of the democratic political beast.

But once I landed in Ukraine, I decided the smartest thing to do while representing large multi-national corporations would be to divorce myself from the political

consulting world, and present a non-partisan face in business. That's been my *modus operandi*.

I changed my mind, which, having passed into my Yellow Leaf period, I am allowed to do. Times change.

During this time, however, I did manage with my colleague from Moscow, Roman Diukarev, to work with two politicians who later became prime ministers of Romania, Calin Popescu-Tariceanu, and the current PM, Victor Ponta. We also worked with a Bosnian prime minister.

We didn't make them PMs—that would be a huge romancing of the product. We, however, added an edge when it came to delivering messages and responding to questions. Additionally, we considered media training non-denominational, and worked with many opposing parties over the years.

Last year we received a call to spend the day with **Alexei Navalny**, the anti-corruption leader in Russia and No. 1 thorn in Putin's paw. Olga Willard and I like to think we contributed to the somewhat surprising 30 per cent of the vote in a crowded field.

He did this, of course, with no commercial advertising, and having been banished from the state-controlled Russian media. It certainly resonated with the Lizard of Oz. Alexei is now back under house arrest for participating in an anti-Kremlin rally.



Dr. Olga Bogomolets

More recently, we spent the day working on messages with **Dr. Olga Bogomolets**, sometimes referred to as the white angel of the Maidan for administering to the wounded during those very dangerous days on the square. She's a candidate for Ukraine's presidency.

Is she a long-shot? Yes. Do I think she will figure prominently in Ukraine politics in the future? *Definitely*. She's a quick study and a smart candidate. She's an outsider, which makes her even more attractive to those who are tired of the same old faces.

It seems that between advising *Navalny* and *Dr. Bogomolets*, the old political fever came back with a vengeance. I don't think it is curable this time.

The Willard Reader



Robert DiCapo, Michael Willard

Recently I created another Facebook page called The Willard Reader, and am about to launch a website with the same name.

This is where I combine the books I have written; novels and non-fiction, and eventually the songs that I have penned that have been recorded by a fellow I think is a terrific artist, Robert (Rob) DiCapo, who happens to be my son.

Rob came to Ukraine nine years ago, performed at several night clubs, appeared on TV and radio shows, and held a news conference. My hope is to get him back in the not too distant future to record more of my songs in Kyiv. In the meantime, we are working with a Ukrainian producer.

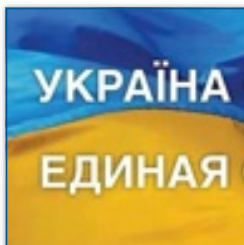
I cannot remember a time I wasn't interested in writing, from songs, to poetry to novels and non-fiction. For the last two years I have concentrated on novels with a body of works that includes "Killing Friends", "Urainia: The Fable" and the soon-to-be-released "A Thief Wears a Burning Hat."

In the pipeline is a political thriller based in Washington, D.C., West Virginia and Kyiv called “The Legacy of Moon Pie Jefferson”. Many of the characteristics of “Moon Pie” stem from my years working closely for the late U.S. Senate Democratic Leader Robert Byrd. It will be out in 2015.

With the uptick in speaking assignments, I also plan a non-fiction book next year addressing what has been described as a fear almost as great as that of death—speaking in front of an audience. While it will include many tips, it will be a narrative built around great speeches.

Lately, the demand from corporations and individuals for public speaking coaching has increased. I see this as the natural growth of Ukrainians from just wanting to be more comfortable speaking to mastering the art of engaging an audience of 2 or 2,000, including impressing their home offices and corporate leadership.

If you would like to talk about public speakers coaching, just give me a shout.



In these trying times, I wish us all

Michael Willard

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