



## Random Notes

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*From the desk of Michael Willard, chairman of Willard and Non-Executive Director, Kyiv Post. Random Notes for special friends of Willard.*

September, 2013

### *Willard London*

Allan Biggar is a big guy, almost as big as his considerable talents as a communicator and public relations counselor. He's Willard's guy in London.

-- The fellow is a former European CEO of Burson-Marsteller and subsequently Global Chairman of their Corporate and Financial Practice, one of the top PR consultancies in the world. In fact, that's how we met way, way back in 1994 when he was heading up privatization projects in Egypt and me Ukraine for B-M.

--He's a creative fellow. In some ways he was the model for Craven Colbert in my new book "Urainia: A Fable", except that Craven is a skinny sort of fellow, and Allan is the size guy you would want on your side in a tag-team wrestling match.

--We worked together briefly a couple of years ago when he had clients in Abu Dhabi. It was a good experience, and I always wanted to renew that association. This month, that's what we have done. He and his team will be Willard London.

--We're already working toward a couple of projects, and I am looking forward to many more. London seemed a logical extension of Willard. We planted a flag in Kyiv in 1998, Moscow in 2001, Istanbul in 2005 and now London in 2013.

--It's a good way to celebrate Willard's 15 years of service to clients and causes that matter.

### *Willard Mediterranean*

As I write this I am at our home in Side, Turkey, a town Mark Antony supposedly gave to Cleopatra as a present. But, if you believe that story, I have a bridge in Brooklyn to sell you, along with prime dacha land in the Chernobyl Zone.

But, it's a good story for tourists.

--Sitting on my balcony smoking a Cohiba sort of opens the creative portals. I would like to say I can see a sliver of Mediterranean Sea from here, but that would be really romancing an already nice environment. Maybe if I get on a step ladder.

--However, we do have a great view of the Taurus Mountains, and the sea is a 10-minute jaunt away. The point is this: It is great to re-fuel the engines, and I have been visiting Turkey ever since 1968 when I covered NATO exercises for a Florida newspaper, The Tampa Times.

--Last year, I started and made good progress on my book "Killing Friends" on this balcony. This last May, I worked on the concept and started writing "Urainia: A Fable". This week I am into the third draft of "The Thief Wore a Burning Hat". If nothing else, our get-away is a launching pad for writing and thinking big, outrageous thoughts.

--Olga and I have had this place for nearly eight years. We sometimes think of selling it because, alas, it has only appreciated in value \$3.32 over that span. But, we have—even though our visits aren't that frequent—grown accustomed to the neighborhood and the people.

-- Besides, I am sketching out in my mind a book called "Noble Rot", about an aging newspaper guy who ends up doing something rather phenomenal. Next May on this balcony will be a good time to start.

### *The Willard Roundtable*

**W**e probably never solved an actual problem around the Willard Round Table at Rylsky Museum, but we sure have a good time arguing the merits, tipping just a little, and enjoying a catered dinner that sometimes comes up a little short of being a culinary delight.

--But people don't attend the Willard Round Table for the food. That would be like going to a concert to hear Andrea Bocelli sing "Old McDonald Had a Farm". You enjoy the round table for its energetic conversation and warm atmosphere.

--Such was the case recently when we revived the round table after a two year absence while I worked mightily to get the Kyiv Post on an even-keel. We came fairly close to that goal, and recently I took myself out of the cost structure to focus on Kyiv Post Conferences.

--At the re-launch of the Willard Roundtable we had a great group consisting of managing directors of Nestle, Colgate, Astellas, Amrop, partners in two law firms CMS and Lavrynovych and special guests the Czech Ambassador and the chief advisor to the first deputy Prime Minister.

--Tossed on the table were such diverse topic as a possible currency crisis, Ukraine's potential for EU accession and even the specter of the U.S. sending cruise missiles toward Syria. Every topic generated lively discussion.

-- Sasha, the cornet player, kept up melodic arrangements softly in the background. I discovered Sasha for the round table eight years ago. He was playing for coins and selling CDs in a Kyiv park. Ever since then he's been our WR talent.

--There are few ground rules during the discussion: Everyone must enjoy the evening. An occasional raised voice is okay. But, no biting or gouging allowed.

## *Kyiv Post Conferences*

**We**’re looking for ways to top the last two Kyiv Post Conferences which ranked high on the success ladder with special appearances by Georgian President Saakashvili and heavy-weight boxing champion and Ukrainian politician Vitaly Klitschko.

--This has led to negotiations with Vladyslav Kastiv and his State Agency for Investments and National Projects team which has agreed to be the December Tiger conference’s general partner. Together we are looking for “Elvis”—that superstar that will add to the KP conference reputation of being the best and most prestigious public conference in Ukraine.

--Once again we are focusing on several key areas: Energy, Agriculture and Finance.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. M. ...", is centered on the page.