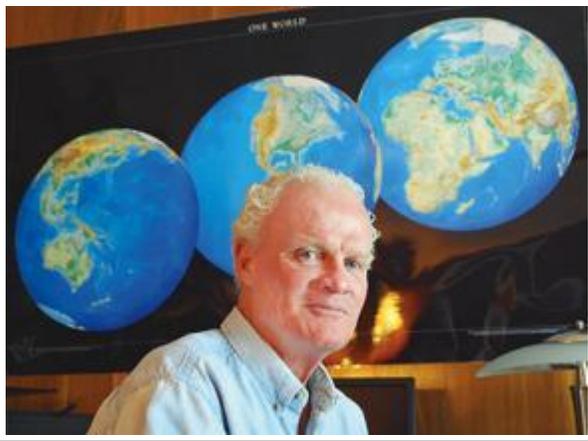


Book by Ex-Vienna Council Member Focuses on Global Citizenship

by **BRIAN TROMPETER, Staff Writer**

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Former Vienna Town Council member Bob McCormick recently published a philosophical and autobiographical book, titled "Don't Drink the Water: A Citizen's Story." (Photo by Brian Trompeter)

Bob McCormick thinks humanity is on the threshold of a momentous decision: Will people learn to cooperate, share resources and settle disputes without violence, or will they continue on the current course, poisoning the planet and letting untold millions die through warfare and preventable diseases? "We'll be remembered either as criminally negligent or guided by enlightened awareness," said the former Vienna Town Council member, who is pushing for a global summit to chart humanity's common future. Great thinkers throughout the ages, from Mahatma Gandhi to Winston Churchill and Gen. Douglas MacArthur, have recognized the need for worldwide cooperation, McCormick said. The United States, which sells massive amounts of weaponry and uses up a disproportionate share of the world's resources, is in a position to bring about crucial changes, he said. "Instead of shocking and awing them with weapons, we can shock and awe them with our compassion," he said.

McCormick recently published an autobiographical and philosophical book, "Don't Drink the Water: A Citizen's Story," which he co-wrote with Teresa Spencer. He dedicated it to the U.S. citizenry. The title derives from a saying of Mr. Steinhelper, an elderly neighbor who befriended McCormick in his youth and gently taught him how to cope with life's struggles. "Don't drink the water" was Mr. Steinhelper's way of telling McCormick to form his own conclusions.

The memoir is a deeply personal look at how McCormick came to be who he is. Growing up in Buffalo, N.Y., McCormick suffered at the hands of his temperamental father. Several anecdotes, one especially painful, show father and son on a collision course. Against expectations - his sister, Paulette, was the family's genius and received most of the father's blessings - McCormick enrolled in Canisius College and came into contact for the first time with a wide range of provocative ideas. After college, McCormick was married for a short time, then divorced because he was not ready to have children. He moved down to the Washington, D.C., area and promptly met the woman who would become his second wife.

McCormick worked as a tower crane operator during construction of the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. During his idle moments, he enjoyed the view and marveled how the world seemed to be free from boundaries. McCormick later became an independent insurance broker and active in Vienna's civic life. In the mid-1990s, he tried to have a bridge for pedestrians and bicyclists built on the Washington & Old Dominion Trail over Maple Avenue. Unhappy with the Vienna Town Council's unwillingness to hold a public hearing on the matter, he ran for council and won. His five years on the council were often contentious. Some members viewed his initiatives, such as Vienna's Oldest Tree Contest, as self-aggrandizing.

McCormick's emotional state took a dramatic turn following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. He began reading works by philosophers, political titans and gurus in an attempt to break through the madness of the world and find a sustainable solution for humanity. McCormick formed the Global Plan Initiative, which later became GlobalSummit.org. He rejects the idea the world's problems are too intractable to solve. "No matter what time in human existence, there will always be a culture with those who are winning the game and losing the game," he said. "The existence of special interests should not stop the development of human intelligence."

His interests became obsessive, to the detriment of his second marriage. Before the divorce, McCormick suffered an emotional breakdown and spent two straight days crying at his cabin in Great Falls. The episode was an extended version of crying jags he had suffered since he was a boy. McCormick later spent four days at a mental-health facility, but emerged only with a recommendation to take vitamin supplements. McCormick then moved to Georgetown, but tired of the constant bustle. Four years ago, he moved into an airy high-rise apartment in southwest Washington, D.C., overlooking a golf course and the Washington Channel.

Roberta MacDonald, a senior vice president with Cabot Creamery Cooperative in Vermont, has known McCormick since 1972 when she was working in Reston. McCormick long has opposed environmental degradation and warfare, but his book crystalizes his message for the public, MacDonald said. "He's my modern Don Quixote," she said. "But it's not windmills. We're all choking at these political leaders who are engaging in such life-threatening activities."

Claire Liston, president of C. Liston Communications Inc. in Alexandria, first met McCormick when she was working at the ViennaTysons Chamber of Commerce and he had an office next door. Liston said McCormick's book is engaging, readable and challenges readers' views of the world. "It's unfortunate that the book probably will get better traction internationally than in the United States," Liston said. "People here are more resistant to let loose the stranglehold on nationalism and start thinking as a global community. That's unfortunate, because the American citizens are the ones most poised to make the biggest difference."