

SHELL SHOCKED

Summit in Sanibel

By Art Stevens

Now it can be told. Trump and Putin held a secret meeting in Sanibel recently to discuss the details of a proposed updated nuclear arms treaty and a resolution to the North Korea situation. There was no fanfare, no procession of cars, no secret service agents with rifles on the roofs of Jerry's and Bailey's. The meeting was so understated that it took place on the beach with Trump and Putin posing as shell collectors. Trump favored this person to person dialogue in an attempt to remove the summit meeting from international scrutiny. Putin favored such a meeting because it gave him an excuse to get out of Moscow for a few days. Besides, he had never tried blackened fish before and his Kremlin cronies told him that next to Russian caviar, blackened fish in Sanibel was a gourmet delight and worth a meeting there with Trump.

So there they were, these two great world leaders, walking along the beach of Sanibel with shovels and pails in an attempt to prevent the world from blowing itself up.

"So, Melania is well, I trust?" Putin said.

"Yes, Mr. President. She sends her deep respects to you and Mrs. Putin and thanks you for your recent generous gift. She wears the vintage Red Army boots on any occasion she can."

"We in turn thank you, Mr. President – uh, may I call you DonDon? Mr. President is so formal. We in turn thank you, DonDon, for the autographed baseball of all the Boston Red Sox players. What a marvelous year they're having. But I still marvel that you allow one of your

American baseball teams to be called 'Reds' -- the Cincinnati Reds. So unlike you careful Americans," Putin chuckled.

"Oh, I think I've got one, Mr. President. Do you mind if I call you Pootie? Pootie, what kind of shell is this? It's shaped like the Pentagon. I think I'll put it in Pompeo's soup and see what his reaction is. I have such a serious cabinet. They just can't take a joke."

The two world leaders continued walking and paused every few moments studying nature's bounty on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. Putin cleared his throat which was his usual signal that polite banter must come to an end.

"DonDon, we've got a sticky problem to deal with. We must both return to our capitals with a deal or the political hacks will be on our backs. Hey, that rhymes."

"Pootie, the key issue is on-site inspection. I'd like to propose that our famous international ambassador John McEnroe represent both our countries and be designated the official nuclear testing inspector in North Korea. John will win the North Koreans over with a display of his sportsmanship," Trump said.

Putin picked up what he thought was a rare shell, realized it was a hard boiled egg and threw it back..

"John McEnroe. Not a chance, DonDon," he said. "The first thing he'll do is say to the North Koreans, 'you can't be serious'. I have enough trouble holding my party together without having to worry about special hearings on McEnroe diplomacy in prime time. What sacrifices we world leaders have to make for the cause of peace.

“ Let’s get on with our negotiations. If you agree to destroy one hundred medium range ballistic missiles by 2020, we will agree to give Ukraine back. But there’s one condition. You will have to agree to hold the 2020 World Series in Moscow.”

Trump frowned. “I don’t know if I can get the baseball commissioner to go along with that. He’s concerned that you might not allow Aaron Judge to leave Russia. But how about this? If we allow you on-site inspection on U.S. soil, then you have to agree to turn over the Bolshoi Ballet to the United States.”

Putin said, “If you agree to let me host Saturday Night Live I think we might have a deal. I have some new North Korea jokes I want to try out. By the way, what kind of shell is this?”

Trump was elated and didn’t bother to answer the question. “I can hardly wait to see Raul Castro’s face when he learns that Cuba is our 51st state. Pootie, we have a deal. How shall we celebrate?”

Putin picked up his pail and shovel, thought for a moment and said, “Can you introduce me to Serena Williams? I’ve always wanted to meet the American who keeps knocking off our teenagers.”