

BRANDING the WORLD

In the world of movers and shakers, ideas count for little, dreams even less. Ideas and dreams without actions are merely non-events. The old proverb, “Actions speak louder than words,” separates the winners from the losers.

RIDGWAY: AN AMERICAN ORIGINAL

John Ridgway is a man whose ideating power has attracted talented people. Together they have created memorable images that have added grace and humor to charm the masses. Through dynamic action, unusual images and exciting sound, they have enhanced the critical messages of countless corporations, countries, governments, agencies, charities, entertainment, and individuals worldwide.

He’s a quiet man who considers his neighborhood the world which he traverses with ease. He is a man with a gracious manner and thoughtful understated demeanor who possesses a soaring mountain of varied talents and capabilities. He has steely determination to improve his world neighborhood, one country and city at a time.

John is man whose quiet power moved millions of people to reject shackles and choose to be free. Did this man really change the direction of one of the significant nations of the world?

The year was 1993, less than three weeks before a referendum that would either give democracy a chance in Russia or return Russia to the communists. The fate of this nation rested on the people voting, “Da. Da. Nyet. Da.” So let’s begin with my question to John Ridgway about his Russian experiences; it is a story that has been largely overlooked.

John, I’m going to begin with your Russian experiences of which very little has been known. There is so much I want readers to know about you and we’ll get to the rest of your career after this, I promise.

For years my friend Ben Goddard, President of First Tuesday, and I have called it “The Russian Thing.” My Russian experiences kind of fall into three chapters and your question is about chapter two. Let’s start with chapter one which is when I visited the Soviet Union with a group of other journalists from The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times and the Washington Post. It was a trip set up to speak with the press there.

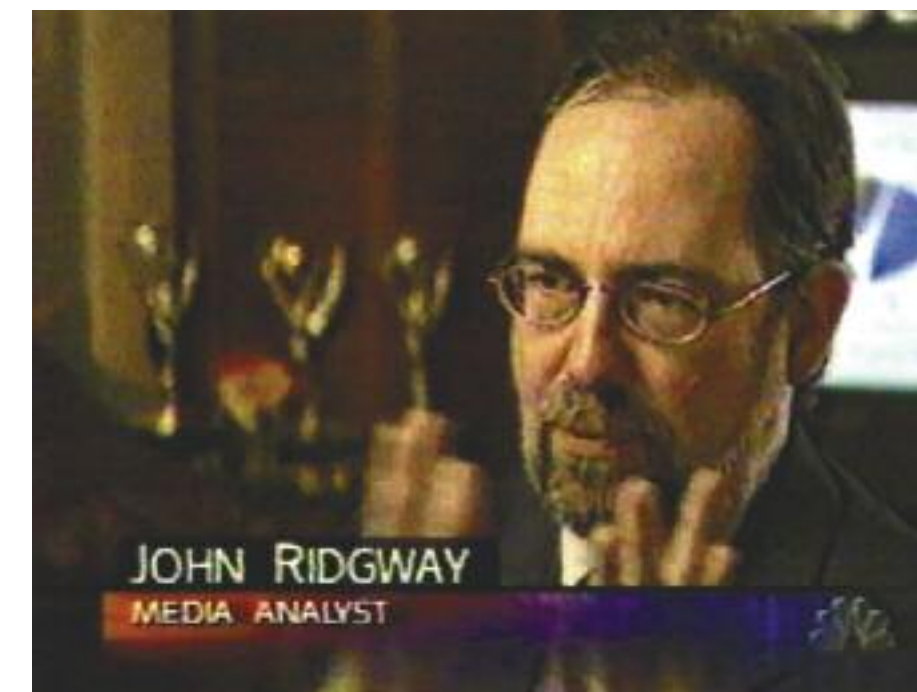
We had scheduled meetings with the editorial board of Pravda and it was quite an eye opener because, first of all, just seeing the Soviet Union and the way that communist systems worked in those times was exciting. I had been to China right after China opened, too. I think people never really knew that it was hard to get into these communist systems and people here never really knew how bad they were. They were really awful, just soul-scarring and wretched, the complete opposite of our systems. They were systems that just beat people into the ground. It became very, very clear to me that this was a system that had to go away. I also came out of that trip thinking that one of the real keys was going to be television and communications, a line of work that I loved. I knew that once we could break that iron curtain we would be able to use technologies that were coming, that would allow us to be able to

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receive satellite transmission. Once those folks got an idea of the way we were living, things were bound to change. The other dynamic was that they could not keep their people from knowing the way the rest of the world was living. I became fixated on that and came back and actually did some work with USA, some pro bono work toward that end.

By early 1993, Gorbachev had given it up and Yeltsin was in power, and there still had not been an actual election in Russia. The communists were still waiting in the wings with plans to take power back one way or another, but at this point we were talking about, it was Russia, and Yeltsin was running it. The communists did somehow have enough control, or did control the Duma enough, to put together a referendum that had four questions which threatened to topple the Yeltsin administration, opening the door for the communists to take over again. It was a very cleverly



JOHN WAS A CONTRIBUTING MEDIA ANALYST ON NBC. HE WAS CALLED ON TO COMMENT ABOUT THE MEDIA IN THE MOST EXPENSIVE CONGRESSIONAL RACE IN THE HISTORY OF THE COUNTRY.

THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN ON SET IN GERMANY WHILE SHOOTING THE TALENT FOR RTL EUROPE'S #1 (PREMIER) TV CHANNEL.

