

# Michael Varga MEDIA KIT

## **Michael's Contact Information**

Michael Varga

[www.michaelvarga.com](http://www.michaelvarga.com)

## **Michael's Speaking Topics**

Chad

Peace Corps

African Economic Development

Careers with the U.S. State Department

Life as a Diplomat

Writing short stories, plays, books...and more



## **Michael's Photos**

Headshot:

Peace Corps and other photos at:

[-www.michaelvarga.com](http://www.michaelvarga.com)

[-https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5p9haTyq5mY#t=217](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5p9haTyq5mY#t=217)

## **Michael's Social Media Links**

Michael's website

[www.michaelvarga.com](http://www.michaelvarga.com)

Michael on Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/underchadspell](http://www.facebook.com/underchadspell)

Michael on Twitter:

@underchadspell

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Michael's story and photos on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5p9haTyq5mY#t=217>

## **Michael's Personal Story**

Michael Varga wouldn't settle for one dream. He had at least two: writing and traveling.

The writing bug bit this Philadelphia Catholic boy back in elementary school when he stood before his class and read a story he had written, watching his classmates wait in anticipation for how the story would end.

The desire to travel came from listening to his father escape to the basement of their house, and tune his shortwave radio to the strange sounds of other languages, broadcast from unknown corners of the world. Michael's family was poor, so there was no money for traveling physically. But listening to that shortwave radio, they could escape to Europe, the South Pacific, and other exotic locales with hard-to-pronounce names.

Michael would go on to achieve his dreams and, ironically, find a way to combine the two.

Graduating from Roman Catholic High School in Philadelphia, Michael continued his education at Rider College (now Rider University). Graduating in 1977 and earning his K-through 12 teaching certificate, the pull of Michael's dreams intensified. Michael felt the Peace Corps was his ticket to travel while also providing him a chance to do good for others.

Three weeks after graduating from Rider, Michael's family said an anxious goodbye to their son as he left for his two year Peace Corps stint in the middle of Africa. There, Michael fell in love with his new home, Chad, and its people. All went well with his Peace Corps duties until civil war broke out and all Americans were evacuated from the turbulent nation. There are no Peace Corps Volunteers in Chad today because of the continued threats to security.

After a variety of jobs upon returning to the States, Michael landed at the University Of Notre Dame (South Bend, IN) where he earned his master's in development economics in 1985.

While living in South Bend, The Acting Ensemble of South Bend premiered one of Michael's plays, "Payable Upon Return". The play had been published by the Juniper Press at the University Of Notre Dame in 1983, (ISBN# 0-911187-01-4). The play centers on a group of friends, one of whom returns from the Peace Corps. Payable Upon Return won the first prize in The Acting Ensemble New Play competition in 1985.

Longing for more travel, Michael passed the Foreign Service Exam and became an American diplomat. He served as a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. State Department in the United Arab Emirates, Syria, Morocco, and Canada. He also served in Washington, D.C. in the Economic Bureau and as the desk officer for Lebanon when the last American hostages were released in the 1990s. He was also a Pearson Fellow at the World Trade Center, Miami.

During his time as an American diplomat, Michael wrote a short story, "Collapsing Into Zimbabwe" which won the Toronto Star's annual contest in 1995. His honors were not limited to his writing, however, and Michael earned a Meritorious Honor award for individual accomplishment in Casablanca, Morocco and another one in Toronto, Canada. As part of a team, he shared in another Meritorious Honor award for Foreign Service Officers who worked behind the scenes at the G-7 (now the G-8) Summit in Halifax, Canada in 1995.

In 1989, Michael made his movie debut, appearing in the movie "Casablanca Express." The movie stars Glenn Ford, Jason Connery, and Donald Pleasance. Shooting was done on location in Morocco. Michael plays a GI medic with some lines at the very end of the movie.

Since his retirement from the Foreign Service, Michael is committed to various volunteering projects, his writing and enjoying his family. He stays in touch with some of the other volunteers who served with him in Chad.

Funny thing about dreams, though. They never really end. And so, as Michael see his first book, "Under Chad's Spell" go to print, he is currently working on his next novel about the Foreign Service.

He lives in Georgia where he often—even to this day—has Chad on his mind.

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### **Michael's Writings, Productions and Honors**

- Addicted to Chad - Literal Latté (Spring 2011)
- Throwing in the Towel in Casablanca - Foreign Service Journal (October 2009)
- A Random Act of Destiny - Notre Dame Magazine (Autumn 2005)
- Waiter! - Commonweal Magazine (August 16, 1996)
- Collapsing into Zimbabwe - Toronto Star (1995)
- Epiphany in the Spud Room – New Works Theatre of Arlington, VA (1991)
- After Birth Stems the Urge – Hassan II University (1989) Casablanca, Morocco
- There Are No Kangaroos in Egypt - BBC (1988) - adapted for the stage in 1991 and given a staged reading at the Source Theatre (Washington DC) for its summer play festival.

### **Michael's Acting Roles**

- The Odd Couple - (Murray, the cop) - Lionheart Theatre, Norcross, GA - (2013)
- Casablanca Express – (GI Doctor) – Movie starring Glenn Ford, Morocco - (1989)
- On Golden Pond - (Charlie, the Mailman) - The South Bend Civic Theatre, South Bend, IN - (1983)
- The Good Doctor - (Chekhov, the writer) - The South Bend Civic Theatre, South Bend, IN - (1982)
- Loose Ends - (Russell) - The South Bend Civic Theatre, South Bend, IN - (1982)
- You Can't Take It With You - (Tony Kirby) in a Streetlight Theatre Production in South Bend, IN - (1982)

### **"Under Chad's Spell" Review**

UNDER CHAD'S SPELL is the fascinating story about a group of Peace Corps Volunteers who are seeking adventure in faraway Chad, Africa. And they get more than they bargained for.

Two volunteers, Charlene and Madison, go completely different routes in Chad. Charlene is stationed in the city, where she enjoys at least some of the creature comforts she's used to. There she satisfies herself with teaching English to the "city natives." Madison, however, is stationed in a remote village. Despite the hardships, he throws himself into the Chadian lifestyle, experiencing native life with the villagers. He teaches them English, but they teach him much more.

Then civil war breaks out, and the volunteers' lives are in grave danger.

Michael Varga gives us an education in Chadian life without ever seeming to teach. He brings alive not just the characters Madison and Charlene, but the natives of Chad. This is a book that will appeal to a broad readership because there's something in it for everyone. I highly recommend this book to readers.

**---Lynda Fitzgerald, author**

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Other books on <http://www.fitzgeraldwrites.com>

### **Press Releases**

- **Award Winning Author Pens Africa Book**  
*Peace Corps Experience Comes Alive in New Release*