
Do Not Go Gentle

For the *Paul Harvey Report*

by Steven R. Van Hook

"Do not go gentle into that good night ... Old age should burn and rave at the close of day." That was the advice of poet Dylan Thomas to an elderly father in 1952. And it's still good advice today. There is no reason why as we advance through our golden years that we should tread any lighter upon the earth.

If there ever was a man living up to this standard, it is retired American businessman Robert Kriebel. In 1988 when he was only 70 years young, Bob Kriebel founded a program to bring a better understanding of business and democracy to people living in the communist republics of the Soviet Union. Since then - in less than seven years - the Kriebel Institute has trained more than 10,000 students throughout the fallen Soviet empire in how to start a business, how to distribute goods and services to a demanding public, how to run for public office and bring about democratic reforms. There is no charge for the seminars. These eager students have little to give beyond abundant enthusiasm and a hunger for a new way of life. Bob Kriebel has helped feed this desire, and he has bankrolled most of it from his own pocket.

Bob Kriebel has met with world leaders including President George Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin to discuss economic changes and emerging democracy throughout Russia and the former communist bloc. But he did not begin in such impressive circles. Some 35 years ago he managed to borrow a bit of money from his friends and neighbors to start the Loctite Corporation -- the Super Glue people. Through his inventiveness and hard work, Bob Kriebel helped to mold this endeavor into a wealthy and successful Fortune 500 company. He has his doctorate in chemistry and holds a dozen different patents in silicones and anaerobic adhesives.

Bob Kriebel says he began his excursions to Russia after retiring from the business world to help ensure that his grandchildren and future progeny never again have to live under the fear of a nuclear cold war. He has taken his seminars to more than 50 cities of 18 countries throughout the former Soviet empire. In spite of his 77 years, Bob Kriebel keeps up a hectic pace, traveling to Russia and the region every two months for three day seminars each in three different cities. He carries his own luggage. He flies domestic Aeroflot flights. He stays in old and rugged hotels. He survives the harsh Russian winter weather.

Bob Kriebel is not making this trip alone. He has recruited the efforts of other retired and senior executives for his seminar trips. His years in business have supplied him with an impressive rolodex. The names of his trainers read like a who's who in corporate America - Jean-Pierre Van Rooy, President of Otis Elevators; Thibaut de St. Phalle, former director of the U.S. Export-Import Bank; and business luminaries such as James Ballentine, Ed Donley, Tom Claffin, Ken Butterworth.

His trainers pack along their decades of business and political experience plus their personal understanding of what it takes to find success in a competitive world. This they offer freely and generously to the struggling entrepreneurs and democratic leaders of the new and aspiring lands breaking free from communism's restraints. Bob Kriebel's trainers don't charge a penny for their tutelage. They even pay their own travel expenses.

This senior ambassador of business provides a laudable example of what we all can accomplish well into our golden years. With a clear mind and a clear voice, we can rumble our entire way through life. Why go along quietly? For some good reasons why not, just ask Bob Kriebel.

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