

NEWS RELEASE

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AUTHOR OPENED RADIO, TV DOORS TO MINORITIES

When Ralph Baruch, then head of Viacom, attended radio and television industry functions in New York City in the early eighties, “I immediately noticed there were few racial minorities at these events, reminding me that communications as a whole lacked minority representation.”

Baruch, as he writes in his new book, “Television Tightrope: How I Escaped Hitler, Survived CBS, and Fathered Viacom,” [available in April 2007 from Probitas Press via Independent Publishers Group] decided to do something about it.

In 1983, backed by fellow directors of the International Radio and Television Society (IRTS), he initiated a minority career workshop, held at the Viacom Conference Center. They recruited minorities who were college students or recent graduates, and instructed them on how to dress, to conduct themselves in interviews, to write resumes, and other tips to winning a job.

Two days later, a dozen or so communication companies set up booths at the Viacom center, interviewed applicants, and hired a number of them. The IRTS minority career workshops have continued annually at a New York hotel, the next one scheduled March 29-30, 2007. The workshops are free to applicants. Hundreds of African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, and others now work in communications after landing jobs at the workshops.

(more)

At about the same time, Baruch also organized the first cable television fund-raising dinner to develop minority managers for that industry. Those dinners likewise continue today, as a memorial to Walter Kaitz, a former cable pioneer in California.

Readers of “Tightrope” learn that Baruch’s empathy for minorities comes naturally from his own life experiences. He was a Jewish boy in Germany as Adolf Hitler was rising to power. At the age of nine in 1932, he writes, “On the way home from school one day, I was attacked by a group of twelve- or thirteen-year-olds who wore black short pants and brown shirts—the standard Hitler Youth uniform.

“Some had knives. They screamed anti-Semitic insults as they beat and slashed at me, leaving a scar on my knee I would carry the rest of my life. A year later the government by decree forced us Jewish students to leave state public school and attend all-Jewish schools. For me it was a devastating change. I lost all my friends.” [p 6]

Baruch and his family fled Germany for France, then were forced to flee again—this time to the United States—when the Nazis stormed into Paris in 1940.

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