



## WITH A SERVANT'S HEART: REFLECTIONS OF LARRY SPEARS

—INTRODUCED BY SHANN FERCH

### INTRODUCTION

*Earlier this year, longtime Greenleaf Center President & CEO Larry C. Spears announced he would be stepping down from that role and into a new position with the Greenleaf Center as Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus. A search for a new CEO was launched and in April it was announced that Kent M. Keith had been appointed as the Greenleaf Center's new CEO, and that Larry Spears has now begun in his new role.*

*Larry's graceful relationship to the notion of servant-leadership as a way of life has informed a generation of important thinkers. In this graceful relationship to serving and leading, Larry has not only heralded a bright new day in the field of leadership studies, he has also given people the opportunity to more fully realize the kind of legitimate power and greatness embodied in the ideas of Robert Greenleaf.*

*In my own interactions with Larry, I have been struck by many important aspects of his character. Specifically, he is a deep, willing, and attentive listener. . . and from his listening arises the kind of questions that re-envision the world and create a sense of "seeing things whole." Diminishment, degradation, negation, the many ills of the human condition, fall away and a more purposeful, articulate, and generous mindset comes to the fore. A second recurring experience I've encountered in Larry is his natural presence: a presence of quietness and peace. He walks unhurried and unhurried by the speed of the contemporary world. In the book of Isaiah it is said of such a person: "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." This is a resonant echo of what it is like to be with Larry on occasions as*



*varied as dinner, a significant leadership engagement, a long-term writing project, or a simple walk together. Finally, I am honored to have been with Larry during a couple of his most recent times of immense gratitude. He views the world through loving and grateful eyes, and from a heart of compassionate thankfulness he gives to those he loves. His life is a personal tribute to his wife and sons, and his devotion to so many of the fine people of servant-leadership throughout the world is delightful and profound.*

*There are vital findings emerging in present social science research. One such finding is that those with higher capacity for gratitude also experience greater levels of critical thinking. When we lack gratitude, we diminish or perhaps arrest our ability to conceptualize or foresee the kind of great dream that might carry us to a transcendent discovery in the human community. Larry Spears, a man of gratitude, has for the past seventeen years forwarded the subtle and immeasurably rich notions of servant-leadership, and helped transform the harsh landscapes of organizational life into valleys of peace and mountaintops of exceptional vision. With his acceptance of his new role as Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus, this seems like a good moment in time to pause in recognition of Larry's monumental work in advancement of servant-leadership. I'm thrilled that he will continue with the Greenleaf Center in his new role as Senior Fellow & President Emeritus, and that he will now be able to more fully focus his energies on his true love and calling: raising global awareness of the meaning and practice of servant-leadership through the written word.*

*Shann Ferch  
Editor, The International Journal of Servant-Leadership  
Professor, Leadership Studies  
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## THE FIRE WITHIN

—LARRY C. SPEARS

Over the past seventeen years I have had the great privilege of personally getting to know (and especially to learn from) many wonderful servant-leader practitioners and thinkers. The following insights from three of them come to mind as I write this:

The great opportunity is to discover in one's mature years an unrealized growth potential. Growth, not in terms of external achievement, but in the things that are important in the quiet hours when one is alone with oneself; growth in the capacity for serenity in a world of confusion and conflict, a new kind of inner stamina, a new kind of exportable resource as youthful prowess drops away.

—Robert K. Greenleaf, *On Becoming a Servant-Leader*

There are four needs in all people: To live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy. When these needs overlap, you find that internal motivation, the fire within. Starting with your own fire, you can create something that will burn bright for many people and last a lifetime—you can empower others to live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy. You can be a servant-leader.

—Stephen R. Covey, *Focus on Leadership*

Once we have broken out of the ego-shell of self we are open to our fellow humans—first in awareness, then in growing sensitivity, compassion, and empathy, and finally in love and dialogue.

—Bill Bottum, *Within Your Reach*

I have spent the better part of two decades doing my best to provide effective and caring organizational leadership and management for the Greenleaf Center. Along the way—and most often done on the nights and weekends from home, or from hotel rooms while traveling—I've been able



to focus some of my energies on the writing and editing of servant-leadership books, journals, articles and the like. Over the years it has increasingly been this work—squeezed in here and there where I can—that has helped to introduce servant-leadership to millions of readers, radio listeners, and television viewers.

While both types of endeavors have provided immense satisfaction—coupled with great results for a very long time—in recent years I have felt my own personal “fire” burning with a far greater intensity around the creation of new publications and other kinds of learning resources. The drum-beat of my own personal calling—to encourage greater awareness and practice of servant-leadership through my written and edited works—finally reached the point where I have felt the need to make a choice between the necessary full-time focus on management and leadership of The Greenleaf Center on the one hand, and the ongoing development of the servant-leadership movement worldwide via the creation and promotion of new learning resources on the other.

Through conversations with a number of friends and advisors, and with the support of the Greenleaf Center board, I have finally been able to make that difficult choice and I will soon be moving from the role of President & CEO to that of Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus. My conversations with a number of people have been invaluable in this process. The following people have functioned as a kind of informal “Clearness Committee” for me, and I wish to publicly thank them: James Autry, Paul Davis, Shann Ferch, Beth Lafferty, Jack Lowe, Jeff McCollum, John Noble, and George SanFacon.

Among the responsibilities in this new Greenleaf Center position are the researching, writing, editing, and publishing of a wide range of meaningful works.

Much of this work will now be done from my home office, though I plan to maintain a schedule that will have me working from my Greenleaf Center office at least one day a week. I will also be able to better set my own work priorities, and to maintain a more reasonable work and travel





schedule than in the past. I hope to be of even greater service to both the Greenleaf Center and the servant-leader movement worldwide through my work in this new position.

I have a number of projects already underway which I expect to see published in the next year. Among these are:

- *Scanlon EPIC Leadership*. My friend and president of the Scanlon Leadership Network, Paul Davis, and I have produced an anthology of writings titled *Scanlon EPIC Leadership: Where the Best Ideas Come Together*. It includes contributions from Warren Bennis, Max DePree and others.
- *Servant-Leadership Anthology*. Over the past three years I have been collecting and soliciting potential contributions to our next servant-leadership anthology. I'm reading through over 120 articles and essays and will select about 25 of them for inclusion within it.
- *Servant-Leadership and Myers-Briggs*. I've recently picked back up this manuscript essay which Greenleaf Centre-United Kingdom Board Chair Ralph Lewis and I are working on.
- *Full-Spectrum Servant-Leadership*. This is the working title for a monograph which George SanFacon and I are writing, and which includes ideas and inspiration from our mutual friend, Bill Bottum.
- *Annotated Bibliography of Servant-Leadership*. Over the past two years I have encouraged and assisted Betsy Hine in her work to create the first *Annotated Bibliography of Servant-Leadership*. The first edition of this bibliography has recently been posted on the Greenleaf Center's website, and we plan to update it on an annual basis. Betsy's initial article about it is included in this, the 2007 *International Journal of Servant-Leadership*.

Over the past 17 years I have also come to understand that certain broad themes run through many of my own writings, and in my selections of materials for the volumes which I've edited, among them: the search for meaning; a commitment to peace and social justice; the possibility for service to others as a pathway to spiritual development; and, the concept and



practice of servant-leadership. For me, servant-leadership is a key to opening these and other doors of perception. I am looking forward to this unique opportunity to expand and deepen both the knowledge base and wisdom literature about servant-leadership, and in support of The Greenleaf Center.

## 2

### LARRY C. SPEARS APPOINTED TO THE NEW POSITION OF GREENLEAF SENIOR FELLOW & PRESIDENT EMERITUS

[The Greenleaf Center, Westfield, January 1, 2007] The Robert K. Greenleaf Center has announced the appointment of Larry C. Spears to the newly-established position of The Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus.

The *Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus* position is the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a Greenleaf Center associate who has made an extraordinary contribution to the furtherance of the Center's mission. The Senior Fellow & President Emeritus has a wide range of important responsibilities and roles for the Greenleaf Center and the servant-leadership movement worldwide and provides both vision and voice for the servant-leader movement worldwide through leadership and service. Embedded within this position are a variety of roles including those of author, educator, chronicler, documentarian, archivist, storyteller, historian, journalist, teacher, interviewer and researcher.

Specific responsibilities include the research, writing, editing, and publishing of a wide range of meaningful works—via print, electronically, and audio-visual media—that will provide opportunities to engage people in societal transformation and contribute to the ongoing development of the practice of servant-leadership. The position reports to the Board of Trustees of the Greenleaf Center. Responsibilities include:

- Biennially edit, write and/or produce one new book.



- In conjunction with Gonzaga University, annually co-edit and produce *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*.
- Annually edit and produce one or two new publications in the “Voices of Servant-Leadership Essay Series.”
- Annually edit and produce a minimum of two issues of the Greenleaf Center’s newsletter, *The Servant Leader*.
- Annually write and publish a minimum of one new journal, newspaper or magazine article.
- Annually publish one interview.
- Annually produce and disseminate updated editions of the resource catalogue, “Voices” flier.
- Continually support the CEO and the Center direction by helping expand the awareness and practice of servant-leadership in a variety of venues, which may include the translation of Center literature into multiple languages.
- Occasionally travel for meetings, presentations and outreach.

In his new role as Senior Fellow & President Emeritus, Larry Spears will be responsible for setting his own priorities and schedule. He will now do much of his work outside of the office (working from home, some travel). Spears will maintain his office at the Greenleaf Center and will be in the office one day a week.

### 3

A MESSAGE FROM JACK LOWE, GREENLEAF CENTER BOARD CHAIR

*[Reprinted from The Servant Leader, Winter 2007, The Greenleaf Center.]*

In 1980 I succeeded my Dad on the Greenleaf Center Board of Trustees. From that time until 1990, the Center was principally a vehicle to support Bob Greenleaf’s diminished writing and to occasionally decide to reprint some of his previous work. We met less than once a year to accomplish these responsibilities. By the end of that decade we had a part-time staff and were beginning to think about new possible initiatives. Through-



out the 1970s and '80s we had been funded primarily by Lilly Endowment; then, in 1989 we were informed that they were extending to us a final three-year diminishing grant to allow us to get on our own two feet or to cease to exist.

In facing that reality all those years ago we decided to hire a full-time executive director with the hope of creating a future for the Greenleaf Center. Great good fortune brought the Center together with Larry Spears as that Executive Director. In the ensuing years the Center has not only survived (a very speculative outcome in 1990), but has thrived. The timeline inside describes many of the accomplishments under Larry's leadership. Some of the highlights include:

- Sixteen annual International Servant-Leadership conferences featuring some of the leading servant-leadership thinkers, writers, and practitioners in the world.
- The creation of an extraordinary number of publications, including: Nine full-length books; twelve pamphlets in our groundbreaking *Voices of Servant-Leadership* Essay Series; the translation of our books and essays into more than a dozen languages; writing over two hundred published articles; editing over fifty newsletters; two annual journals; and so much more.
- The establishment of eleven International Centers around the globe.
- Ten Leadership Institutes for Education (LIFE) reaching some 200 educational institutions.
- An appearance on NBC's *Dateline* in 2004 which was seen by over ten million viewers.
- Securing foundation support totaling over two million dollars through writing some twenty different grant proposals.
- The building of a permanent headquarters owned by the Center, and much more.

All of us on the Board acknowledge Larry's selfless and excellent service to the Greenleaf Center and to the idea of servant-leadership over the



last seventeen years, and all of us who think servant-leadership is a key ingredient to building a more just and caring society are in Larry's debt.

While Larry's stewardship of the Center has been extraordinary, his real passion has always been in the publications that reach a much wider audience than any other activity of the Center. To follow that passion, Larry will now take on the new role of Robert K. Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus. This will allow him to focus most of his energy and creative spirit on the many different publication aspects of the Center, while being available to support the other activities of the Center and encouraging the growing global awareness of servant-leadership.

4

THROUGH THE YEARS: SELECTED EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION FOR  
THE WORK OF LARRY C. SPEARS

*Goodness! You've accomplished a lot. Thank you, Larry, for continuing and enhancing the ideas of my old friend, Bob Greenleaf. You're a gentleman and scholar.* [2003]

Warren Bennis, author, *On Leadership*

*I'm proud of what you've done.* [2004]

Ken Blanchard, author, *The Servant-Leader*

*You have caused the impossible dream to happen—you saved the Greenleaf Center from certain destruction and made it into an international, overwhelming success—with love.* [2000]

Bill Bottum, Greenleaf Center trustee from 1981-2001

*I hold you in high regard.* [1999]

James MacGregor Burns, author, *Leadership*

*I appreciate the leadership you give to Greenleaf's seminal work.* [2001]

John Carver, author, *Board Governance*



*Chapman University presents you with its Outstanding Leadership Award in recognition of your pioneering efforts and enduring commitment to promoting servant-leadership around the world. [2002]*

Chapman University

*Good friend and partner! Congratulations on the marvelous book, Practicing Servant-leadership. Keep leaving a legacy. When we were born our work was born with us. You're doing it well. Love & appreciation. [2005]*

Stephen R. Covey, author, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

*Your influence personally, professionally and organizationally is much greater than you will ever know. As a student of nonviolence I believe good spirals out from people, and the good in you has spiraled out in many different directions. Talent like yours is not given to many, and the world needs you. [2005]*

Paul Davis, President, Scanlon Leadership Network

*The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership has been blessed with the presence, talent, capabilities, sincere devotion, ethical guidance, and determined stewardship of a man who, for the past ten years, has brought the highest quality of management and leadership to work every day. We are awed by his sense of responsibility, the care he brings to all of his work, whether that is editing a book, writing articles, putting together agendas and financial plans, or working with board members. Our board, staff, and all of us here have been the lucky recipients of his focus and curiosity, his stability and his generosity, his seriousness and his sense of humor. Larry, you have our deepest gratitude for all that you have done—things of high visibility and things of quiet humility. Your ongoing reflective presence, your determination, and your creativity have wrought wonders. As a manager, a leader, an author, an editor, and a fellow traveler on this path called servant-leadership, all of us thank you. [2000]*

—The Greenleaf Center Board of Trustees



*To Larry: Who leads, who inspires, who keeps the faith.* [1998]

—Frances Hesselbein, editor, *The Leader of the Future*

*The 2004 Dare-To-Lead Award is given in recognition of your demonstrated commitment and many contributions to building effective, responsible leaders.* [2004]

—The International Leadership Network

*Thanks for holding up the ideals of servant-leadership!* [2005]

—John Izzo, author, *Second Innocence*

*Thanks for sharing with the world your own sense of inner calling and outer expression.* [2002]

—Michael Jones, author, *Creating an Imaginative Life*

*Thank you for the opportunities you've created, and the extraordinary difference that you are making.* [2003]

—James M. Kouzes, author, *Encouraging the Heart*

*Thanks for your own "fire," and hopes of sitting around it with you often!* [2005]

—Richard J. Leider, author, *Claiming Your Place at the Fire*

*Having just read the most recent issue of *The Servant Leader*, I am impressed by the progress you have made. It really is quite extraordinary. Your growing number of international centers, your many conferences, and the steady stream of publications—all these are impressive. And they did not happen by accident. I can see your energy, enthusiasm, intelligence behind them all. Congratulations!* [2000]

—John Nason, president emeritus of Carleton College

*You and your colleagues have done a splendid job with the Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership. If Bob were alive, he'd be so pleased, and, as I write this, I know he's pleased. The concept has spread far and wide. I*



*often think of the early days when we used to meet at Kennett Square so that Bob could join us. Of the people who used to be at those meetings just Jack Lowe is still with you. What a Prince of a man, Jack Lowe is. And to you, Larry, congratulations. You've made the idea not just sprout, but grow and blossom!* [2002]

—Sister Joel Read, President Emeritus, Alverno College,  
former board member

*Thanks for your wonderful leadership at the Greenleaf Center.* [1999]

—Georgia Sorenson, author, *Dead Center*

*It has been said that all ministers have a theme and whether they are a bore or interesting depends on how many variations they can get on the theme. I am so pleased to see that you are coming up with new angles and new audiences. I also know how difficult it can be to follow a charismatic founder, and that adds all the more to my respect for what you have been able to accomplish.* [2000]

—Edgar Stoesz, author, *Common Sense for Board Members*

*You have done a wonderful job of leading the Greenleaf Center and promoting Greenleaf's ideas. You have a great spirit and a lot of hustle that results in a great organization with a great mission.* [1998]

—Charles Waldo, professor of marketing, Anderson University

*Many blessings for your important work; with gratitude for our shared journey. May you continue to proclaim, teach, and host the vision of a world of servant-leaders.* [2005]

—Margaret Wheatley, author, *Finding Our Way*

*I've great respect for your work.* [2005]

—Danah Zohar, author, *Spiritual Capital*





LARRY C. SPEARS, GREENLEAF SENIOR FELLOW & PRESIDENT  
EMERITUS: THE ROBERT K. GREENLEAF CENTER FOR SERVANT-  
LEADERSHIP

Larry Spears was named Greenleaf Senior Fellow & President Emeritus in 2007, following seventeen years of faithful service as President & CEO of The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership. Prior to 1990 Spears had been Managing Director of the Greater Philadelphia Philosophy Consortium, a cooperative association of 12 colleges and universities in the Philadelphia area. He also served as a staff member with the Great Lakes Colleges Association's Philadelphia Center and with the Quaker magazine, *Friends Journal*, in Philadelphia, PA.

Larry is also a writer and editor. Since 1970 he has published over 300 articles, essays and book reviews, including many for in-house publications. Larry is Senior Editor of the Greenleaf Center's newsletter, *The Servant-leader*. He has also been interviewed by numerous publications, including: *Fortune*, the *Indianapolis Business Journal*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Washington Post*, and *Advancing Philanthropy*. A February 2004 television broadcast interview of Spears by Stone Philips on NBC's *Dateline* was seen by ten million viewers.

Larry is the editor of ten books:

- *Scanlon EPIC Leadership: Where the Best Ideas Come Together* (with Paul Davis, forthcoming)
- *Practicing Servant-Leadership: Succeeding Through Trust, Bravery and Forgiveness* (with Michele Lawrence, 2004, Jossey-Bass)
- *The Servant-Leader Within* (with Hamilton Beazley & Julie Beggs, 2003, Paulist Press)
- *Servant-Leadership* (2002 Silver Anniversary edition, Paulist Press)
- *Focus on Leadership: Servant-Leadership in the 21st Century* (with Michele Lawrence, 2002, John Wiley & Sons)
- *The Power of Servant-Leadership* (1998, Berrett-Koehler)



- *Insights on Leadership: Service, Stewardship, Spirit, and Servant-Leadership* (1998, John Wiley & Sons)
- *Seeker and Servant* (with Anne Fraker, 1996, Jossey-Bass)
- *On Becoming a Servant-Leader* (with Don Frick, 1996, Jossey-Bass)
- *Reflections on Leadership: How Robert K. Greenleaf's Theory of Servant-Leadership Influenced Today's Top Management Thinkers* (1995, John Wiley & Sons).

He is also a contributing author to most of these ten books and to the following four books as well:

- *Robert K. Greenleaf* (2004, Berrett-Koehler)
- *Cutting Edge: Leadership 2000* (2000, University of Maryland)
- *Stone Soup for the World* (1998, Conari Press)
- *Leadership in a New Era* (1994, New Leaders Press).

Larry is Series Editor of the *Voices of Servant-Leadership* Essay Series, and he serves as the Senior Advisory Editor for *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*.

Spears is an occasional speaker on servant-leadership. The titles of some of his addresses include "Servant-Leadership and the Honoring of Excellence," "Servant-Leadership and Business," and "Greenleaf's Influence on Trusteeship." Among his presentations are addresses to The University of Michigan, Alberta (Canada) School Board Association, Indiana Bell, National Society for Experiential Education, and the Association of College Honor Societies. He has addressed audiences throughout North America, Europe, Australia and Asia.

Under Larry's leadership The Greenleaf Center experienced tremendous growth and influence. The Center now has eleven branch offices located around the world in Australia/New Zealand, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Japan, Korea, The Netherlands, the Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Among several honors, Spears was the recipient of the 2004 *Dare-to-Lead Award* given by the International Leadership Network. Larry has thirty years of experience in organizational leadership, entrepreneurial development, non-profit management, and grant



writing, having envisioned and authored 30 successful grant projects totaling several million dollars. He is a longtime member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Larry is a Fellow of the World Business Academy. He and his wife, Beth Lafferty, have two sons: James, 20, and Matthew, 17.