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THE GOOD LIFE OF A SERVANT LEADER

My annual meeting remarks promised that my year as bar president would be underscored with a mindset of servant leadership – a concept that increasingly intrigues me. Only a few hours after those remarks, an obvious servant leader, Judge Suzanne Bauknight wrote me about the genesis of the term, explaining it was coined decades ago in 1970 by Robert K. Greenleaf in his essay *The Servant as Leader*. You are welcome to read the copy I promptly purchased after receiving Her Honor's email. Mr. Greenleaf reminds us that "a true natural servant automatically responds to any problem by listening first" and is accepting of other persons with their imperfections. He has a whole series of essays, even a "Center for Servant Leadership," and no doubt has crafted a very fine living from the concept. The approach is in infancy stages in my life, so my simplistic interpretation is that it means leaders are servants first, putting the needs of others first to help them grow and perform as highly as possible. Who are the leaders? Why all of us, of course. A leader is anyone who does or has the capacity to influence another's life. And from what I am learning, servant leadership enriches lives.

Like any life fully lived, January offered its ups and downs. We weathered rainy and cold wintery skies to sunshiny, 73 degrees promising the eventual return of Spring, and back again. The Executive Committee's initial meeting spawned great ideas for a year of exceptional programming and support for KBA members. Thank you, Keith Burroughs, Hanson Tipton, Cheryl Rice, and Jason Long, for listening to me and one another, accepting some of my clearly imperfect ideas, and for weighing in with the collective purpose of serving the membership – for your leadership. During the Bar Leaders Event set for the last day in January, Buck Lewis and Doug Blaze will guide KBA Board members along with committee and section chairs through a thought-provoking presentation on living purposefully. Their message is that by using our time and talents in worthy endeavors we can create a life that we and others can look back on with pride. In the process, we will both lead and serve others. They gave us a roadmap for a good life. Thank you both for your leadership.

Buck's recent blog advised law students, however, that their lives would not always be a series of green lights. The discourse surrounding the federal government shutdown is an unfortunate example of coming to a screeching halt. Worse, it has become the playground for even more divisive attacks on either side of the aisle by those we consider leaders and by citizens nationwide. But, contrast that with the great display of mercy in the commutation of Cyntoia Brown's sentence and the uplifting message of hope that brings. We received another message about redemption and the good life. In our day-to-day dealings, we can model the servant leader to lift one another up in a similar manner. The KBA Guidelines for Professional Courtesy and Conduct were recently updated, most notably to include language on acceptance and respecting the messenger. They are certainly worth a read. Thank you to Past President Keith Burroughs, Billy Ringger, the Professionalism Committee and Board of Governors for your leadership in writing and adopting them.

This month marks the beginning of the bi-monthly DICTA series *A Community's Response to the Opioid Crisis*. Referred to as either the opioid crisis or opioid epidemic, it might aptly be called a pandemic before long. Since talking about this to the membership in December, I have been approached by countless lawyers and others about opioids touching their lives – stories of addicted employees, co-workers, neighbors, clients and family members – playing out in a plethora of ways. As leaders in every one of those roles, we have a responsibility regarding this sweepingly destructive force. District Attorney Charme Allen provides a compelling overview of the problem in the first article – an "Opioid Crisis 101" about some of the challenges locally. She has also identified other stakeholders to inform us in coming months on other aspects and to maybe help us answer the question, "What can or should we do?" When I posed that same question to her, she first said there is hardly a family in Knox County not affected in some degree by

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the problem, whether they are aware or not. Her response is that the answers to the question are as individual as each unique situation. She stressed the need for collaboration within the community. My take away is that if nothing else, we must educate ourselves. Knowledge is a powerful starting place for any possible solution, or better, for prevention. While Machiavelli is not to be admired as a servant leader considering

his at-all-costs approach to claiming and maintaining power, he still cogently observed in his 16th century treatise *The Prince*: "Thus it happens in matters of state; for knowing afar off (which it is only given a prudent man to do) the evils that are brewing, they are easily cured. But when, for want of such knowledge, they are allowed to grow so that everyone can recognize them, there is no longer any remedy to be found." Given the magnitude of the problem, these articles may be an inadequate crucible to do fully define the issues or identify remedies. If only the tip of the proverbial iceberg, they are a significant launching point to take us through the major aspects -- through the criminal justice system response, education, ramifications, prevention and, hopefully, recovery and a return to a good life. If we listen to these authors and accept their information, we will be better positioned to serve as needed. General Allen, thank you for your leadership.

On February 9, 2018, please join the Golden Gala celebrating our many colleagues who have practiced 50 years or more and exemplify living the good life. In preparation, I told myself I would live a healthier life, lose 30 pounds and buy a sensational dress for the party. None of that has happened, and I am still going to soak up all the stories, joy and fellowship I can that evening. My thanks to all the lions of the Bar we will honor.

This year we will explore many opportunities to grow as servant leaders, hopefully enriching the lives of others and ourselves in the process. If you know a servant leader you would like others to hear about, please let me know. And always, call upon me if you have thoughts about how the KBA can better support you. I will listen.

"Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you'd have preferred to talk." -- Doug Larson