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Subject: {Chairvoice} Reflection on Keepers of the Flame - 2025
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For me, TEC/Vistage has always been about our community of Chairs and our relationship with our members. I remember the first time a member resigned from my first group. Apart from being worrisome (I had worked so hard to add members to launch and then reach critical mass, and I realized this would be something I would always need to do), and it also felt personal. Members weren't clients, at least not in the way I had always experienced them in my past business life. My members were more like family. I got to know as much, or more, about them and their lives as I did their businesses. Losing a member felt like losing a friend. Over time, I recognized that this would be a constant cycle of relationships beginning, changing, and, in most cases, eventually ending.

Life is about change, or, more accurately, our relationships with the changes that occur in our lives. I can allow myself to feel sad or excited. Each new member bore the same sense of possibility that I felt when I thought about each of my four children entering my life: filled with promise and uncertainty. Some I loved, while others I just liked or tolerated. I learned to examine life from the perspective of discerning who I wanted to surround myself with—and who I didn't.

In the decade since I attended my first Keepers, I have grown to understand that the Chair community is more than a gathering. You are a constant in my life that continues to challenge me to grow, to listen more, to experience life more fully, and to be tolerant of the things that are changing in ways that I would have preferred to be otherwise. Rather than a cycle, like the one I experience with members, the Family of Chairs is more of a rhythm. It is always dynamic, changing, growing, and shrinking. But it is always there.

For the past year and a half, I have been writing and publishing a 500-word essay called Leadership Elevations. They are the observations of the world through the eyes of a Chair, focused on what it means to be a good leader, a good human being, and alive. For those who have known me longer than that - you know that my writing was ALWAYS longer than that.

I had the fortunate experience of being introduced to Brian Morgan, who runs a company called Think Deeply, Write Clearly. I have learned how to write from a more personal perspective, and that anything worth saying can be said in 500 words or less. And how to right from reflection rather than instructionally or academically. He is now a member of one of my cohorts. He is also on the Vistage speaker circuit - if anyone is interested.

Below is the essay I wrote this week, reflecting on this year's gathering in Boulder. If you'd like to access my writing regularly, I'd be happy to add you to the email list. Alternatively, you can sign up for the free Leadership Elevations Newsletter on LinkedIn.

With deep appreciation for us.

Phil

Honoring the Keepers in My Life

by Philip R. Liebman

From "Leadership Elevations" ©2025

For eleven years, I've met with about 100 colleagues in Boulder, Colorado, every June. This annual event is one of the most valuable and meaningful things I do. Most of us come from across North America, making Boulder a convenient and central location. The natural wonders and stunning beauty of the area provide an inspiring backdrop for our gathering, making the long journey worthwhile for those traveling from afar.

We come for a taste of our own medicine. The purpose of our professional work is to increase the effectiveness and enhance the lives of CEOs and business leaders. Keepers of the Flame has been gathering for twenty years to provide the same benefit for ourselves and to honor the work we do.

The requirement for an invitation is having worked in our community for ten years or more. The combined experience of tenured practitioners creates enormous value. However, there is even greater value in what we accumulate throughout the years, which influences our perception of the world and becomes the essence of who we are. This work is deeply satisfying and occasionally emotionally exhausting. It sometimes exposes us to the trauma in people's lives as well as their joy and successes. We come to Keepers for the intoxication of celebrating our shared calling—

and to shake off some of the toxic residue that can build up over time when performing this work at a deep level.

I always leave feeling inspired and armed with valuable insights. But that isn't primarily why I attend. It's the community and the connection with people that I have enormous respect and admiration for. There are people who, twenty years ago, were my heroes, and some, legends I'd never met. In blending together, we form a rich tapestry of humanity that humbles and nurtures me. Beyond my family and a handful of people I consider close friends, these are the people I love most in the world. And each year is an opportunity to deepen these relationships and form a few new ones.

Although we are young at heart and in spirit, our population is aging. Many of my colleagues are ten to twenty years older than I am. We quietly honor those we inevitably lose each year, recognizing that what we do is valuable—and that, despite our significant contributions to the world, we remain fragile. This acknowledgment inspires me as much as anything during the three days we spend together each June.

As we age, we gain wisdom that is easily shared with those who share our values. Alongside the sharpness of our thinking, which can be uncanny but not surprising, there is also a softness and kindness from those who dedicate their lives to helping others. The warmth of this flame we nurture and the light it produces always make me a better person. I believe that each time we part ways, we leave the world a better place for everyone.



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• Speaker/Author: Cultivating MoJo:

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• Fellow, Thayer Institute for Performance Virtuosity



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