

KIE 2015 Keynote title: E. Paul Torrance—My Teacher, My Mentor, My Co-Author, My Co-Researcher, My Friend, My Inspiration

I believed it to be most pleasurable for you to have me share with you an intimate look at Dr. Torrance—especially in this year honoring his 100th birthday. The title of my keynote portends that I will not be focusing on his brilliant theories and research, but rather on my very personal interactions with him and to a lesser extent, but just as rewarding, with his wife Pansy.

I met Dr. Torrance in my first year on faculty at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia in 1969. I looked up from my desk in my small office -with a window- to see a gentleman with the most twinkling blue eyes standing at my doorway. He introduced himself and as the Chair of the Division of Educational Psychology, asked if I would help him get gifted certification approved in Georgia, as his goal was to educate teachers to recognize gifted and creative students and then to have strategies to teach them creatively. I of course agreed, for as a third, fifth, middle school and high school math teacher, I intuitively found ways to enrich my students learning experience. Now, my Ph.D. degree is in mathematics education, and I had never heard of Paul Torrance or of creativity as a discipline. But that soon changed as I took every doctoral level creativity course he taught, many with Pansy's assistance, even though I was an assistant professor in the Division of Elementary Education.

Dr. Torrance soon became a mentor and we did research together, published together, and I presented our research at a conference in Stirling, Scotland. My favorite remembrance of one of our collaborative research investigations comparing results on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking and performance on Piaget and my modified Piaget tasks was when Dr. Torrance and I administered the TTCT, as we fondly referred to the full name of the Torrance test, to two first grade classes in an elementary school in Athens. By the way, this is pictured in the Tanner-Reisman book that you received on page 20. The children also had taken the Metropolitan

Readiness Test, which was believed to be "essential for pre reading and pre mathematics learning in the early school years".

Two first grade boys got scores on the TTCT of 120, which is in the highly creative range. Their teachers were shocked and shared that these two boys, according to their Metropolitan results were slated for the special education track for children of lower mental abilities—and also, both of the little boys were “terrible” liars. Dr. Torrance smiled and gently suggested that lying was very creative and that these boys needed to be shown how to apply their creativity in socially acceptable ways. Upon further visits to the school, we heard that the teachers now perceived these two students—not as troublemakers, but rather as bright gifted learners. The teachers began to enrich lessons for their students that resulted in these two boys becoming very engaged in learning and indeed even were serving as mentors to their classmates who needed a bit of extra help. Thus, began my journey to both make teachers aware of their own and of their students’ creative strengths and to look at creativity as a crucial assessment in addition to – or even in lieu of-- IQ and/or achievement tests.

Subsequently, shortly before Dr. Torrance died at age 87 in 2003, I had the privilege of co-authoring three booklets on Learning Mathematics Creatively—by the way, Paul Torrance started his career as a mathematics teacher.

Well, you now know Paul as my Teacher, my Mentor, my Co-Author, and my Co-Researcher.

Now we come to Dr. Torrance as my friend. When my father who was a physician in Syracuse, New York died at age 85, Dr. Torrance and Pansy sent me a book entitled *The Fall of Freddie The Leaf* by Leo Buscaglia. Freddie lives a great life and finally drops off his tree when fall arrives, as is the fate of all leaves who then become mulch to help new plants sprout up and grow. They inscribed the following:

To Freddie Reisman at a time of mourning and renewal

With love and sympathy,

Paul and Pansy Torrance

MAY 28, 1984

I must tell you their insight and intuition into my feelings were beautifully expressed in this little book.

When we created the Drexel-Torrance Center for Creativity and Innovation at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in the US, we wanted to spread the word about his main theoretical contributions; namely, demonstrating that we CAN assess creativity through the **TTCT** which is the most widely used creativity test in the entire world. His controversial **Threshold Hypothesis**, which holds that in a general sample, there will be a positive correlation between low creativity and intelligence scores, but a correlation will not be found with higher scores. He also created the **Future Problem Solving Program International**, which aims to "engage students in creative problem solving". Founded by Dr. Torrance in 1974, he created this program to stimulate critical and creative thinking skills and to encourage students to develop a vision for the future. The program involves over 250,000 students annually from Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Portugal, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore, Great Britain, Turkey, India and the United States. Dr. Torrance's Incubation **Model of Teaching** was developed as an instructional model. Dr. Torrance's 2001 book, *The Manifesto is: A Guide to Developing a Creative Career* includes the results of his 40-year longitudinal study of creativity – the only one of its kind. **His Ideal Pupil Checklist** research resulted in the awareness that teachers do not identify creative students. These Torrance contributions are discussed in chapter four of the Tanner-Reisman book.

We have abstracted the Ideal Pupil Checklist items to identify research-based factors that comprise the Reisman Diagnostic Creativity Assessment (RDCA) that will be the topic of the inaugural RDCA SIG tomorrow afternoon; early morning our time.

Dr. Torrance published 88 books; 256 parts of books or cooperative volumes; 408 journal articles; 538 reports, manuals, tests, etc.; 162 articles in

popular journals or magazines; 355 conference papers; and 64 forewords or prefaces totaling almost 2000 publications.

My Inspiration? Indeed!

Thank you for listening.