

In The Presence of a Living Legend:  
An Executive Summary of Campos's Master's Project.

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This summary highlights the essence of the research project completed by V. Campos in 2000. Her research project was to develop an audio/video VCR taped interview of Ruth Noller Ed.D. / Professor Emeritus of the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State College. The Campos project also provided a compact disk (CD), which contained audio visual interleave (AVI) files for later inclusion on the International Center for Creativity's web site. Additionally, she included a written summary of the project.

#### *Project origin*

Campos began by describing that she got the idea for her project because Dr. Noller was her assignment for the "Adopt-a-scholar" paper for CRS 625. After receiving approval to do this project Campos contacted Dr. Noller via e-mail, and Dr. Noller agreed to participate in it.

In preparation for the interview, Campos read and re-read writings by and about Dr. Noller and viewed her videos on leadership and mentoring. Campos also looked at a number of different biographies (for style and content) and then developed interview questions under Dr. Noller's guidance.

The interview itself took place at Dr. Noller's summer home in Cassadaga, New York, which is south of Buffalo. Campos mentioned that while the finished tape is twenty minutes long, it was edited from over seven hours of initial tape. She noted further that she intended to use this seven hours of interview material as a basis for future work on Dr. Noller.

In her summary, Campos discussed all the work that was necessary to pare the seven hours of video into a twenty-minute presentation including the original taping of

Dr. Noller and then the viewing, transcribing, organizing and editing of the finished product. She also described the preparation of an electronic file on one (1) CD for website publication.

*The tape*

In viewing the audio/video file you will be put at ease from the very beginning.



Ruth B. Noller, Ed.D.

The video was shot in Dr. Noller's kitchen in Cassadaga and it is as if you are sitting across the kitchen table from her. The atmosphere is very relaxed. On the video, Dr. Noller explains that she attended her first Creative Problem Solving Institute (CPSI) in 1964, to become a better math teacher.

*The beginning*

You will find yourself listening intently as Dr. Noller explains her background as a teacher of mathematics and how she came to be involved with one of her first mentors, Rear Admiral Grace Hopper, PhD when they were in the Navy together during World War II, programming the Mark 1 computer at Harvard University.

Dr. Noller's discussions of "Sid" and "Ange" refer to Sidney Parnes and Angelo Biondi, with whom she co-directed CPSI (pronounced sipsy) for a number of years. She personalizes her relationships with these two creativity pioneers and describes how close she was to them throughout her career.

### *Creativity equation*

A very interesting part of the tape is when she actually gives a mathematical equation for creativity as being made up of knowledge, imagination and evaluation with a subscript of attitude. She makes clear that the equation is not so precise as to define how many parts of knowledge, imagination or evaluation need to be present for creativity to exist.

She advises the viewer, “Don’t memorize formulas; work them out instead,” even though she gives the formula for creativity as  $C=f_a(K,I,E)$ . After showing the formula she explains it completely. “C” equals creativity in terms of “K” for knowledge, obtained through the use of all the senses. “I” for imagination or making connections; and “E” for evaluation (meaning, “what’s good about it” or “what could be better about it.”) All of this, taken together, with a subscript “a” for a positive attitude.

Seeing and hearing Dr. Noller explain this formula you are likely to forget that you are watching a video which was taped in her kitchen. For a brief period of time, you’ll get the feeling of being in a classroom and being taught by a legend in the field of creative studies.

### *What she considers notable*

Dr. Noller discusses a book that she wrote called, “Scratching the Surface of Creative Problem Solving: A Bird’s Eye-View of CPS,” during her sabbatical in 1977. She describes this book as being a very simple to read description of what goes on at CPSI. This brief discussion is certain to make you want to review this book to see if it really is as simple as she describes it. She also talks about critiquing, or providing

feedback, to facilitators in creative problem solving sessions, and how she taught that process when she was teaching facilitation.

Throughout the tape, which started as an interview but was edited to a monologue, Dr. Noller compares mathematics and creative problem solving. She says that CPS is a puzzle that needs to be solved, which is why she liked it so much - because she has always liked doing puzzles.

### *Written summary*

After viewing the video and spending time with Dr. Noller on a one-to-one basis, you have the advantage of going back to Campos' written summary of her project and look at how this actually came together. In the appendix, you will find copies of the written communications between Campos and Dr. Noller. The appendix also contains interview questions that the two of them worked out. There is also a complete transcript of the video itself. The project contains a comprehensive reference list of Dr. Noller's publications as well. The final section of the appendix includes AVI transcripts of the 43.0-megabyte CD file.

### *Conclusion*

This project is a great resource for anyone who would like to dig deeper or just know more about Ruth Noller Ed.D. / Professor Emeritus of the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State College. After going through the materials in this project you will come away with a feeling of being personally touched by Dr. Noller, who is a living legend in creativity.

## References

- Campos, V. (2000). *Dr. Ruth Noller: Contributions to creativity*. Unpublished master's project, State University of New York College at Buffalo.
- Noller, R. B. (1977). *Scratching the surface of creative problem solving: A bird's eye-view of CPS*. Buffalo, NY: D.O.K. Publishers, Inc.