

Enthusiasm Stew:

A Recipe for Success as an Independent
Scholar – My Personal Journey

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Closing Keynote Message

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- My task is to keep you from wishing the conference had never ended if only it had ended an hour earlier!

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Being an **Independent Scholar** brings:

- Limited Resources - many of the most useful are internal;
- Additional Freedom to:
 - Explore your interests
 - Expand your horizons
 - Breathe without formal institutional restraints (informal ones still exist)
- A sense of being “less than” and not belonging that comes from a combination of internal and external forces.
- Change. At a recent history conference I attended, over 50% of more than 225 speakers listed on the program had no institutional affiliation.
- At least that is how it has been for me on my journey which began on . . .

Enthusiasm Stew

... Friday Nights at 58 W. Chestnut St. in Souderton, PA in the 1950's and 60's with Leftovers! My dad called it my mom's **Enthusiasm Stew** – because she put **everything she had into it!**



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- ▶ How dare I propose a recipe for “success” as an Independent Scholar? To me, success is:
 - ▶ Contentment with who you **are** and what you are **doing**;
 - ▶ Meeting **realistic** financial goals (budget) for your work;
 - ▶ Finding **fulfillment** in your **identity** and **role** (consulting)*;
 - ▶ Being **affirmed** for your **work product** (by self and others);
 - ▶ Overcoming the “**if-only**” syndrome;
 - ▶ Having integrated all that you **are** and have **experienced** into your work. Like my mom, putting **everything** you have into it!
- ▶ Everything includes everything – The good, not-so-good, and the painful. Each is essential in creating the you who you were, are, and will become. We are all becoming

*Much of my **income** is from consulting, a role often neglected by the independent scholar

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- ▶ What is **my** everything I must put into my Independent Scholarship?
- ▶ A license as an apprentice embalmer.
- ▶ A career divided between higher ed, ministry, business, and K-12.
- ▶ An **insatiable** need to know and understand:
 - ▶ Mexican Revolutionary Era and Religious History;*
 - ▶ The Study of Religion as Conflict and Inter-faith Dialogue;**
 - ▶ Systems Theory in families and organizations – especially the work of Kurt Lewin $B=f(P,E)$ and his force field analysis concept;*
 - ▶ Watches and Clocks – Time;*
 - ▶ Urban Public School District Leadership;**
 - ▶ Geography and Cartography – FRGS;*
 - ▶ Individual and Group Identity Formation.**

* Book exists

** Book forthcoming

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- ▶ Growing up in a fundamentalist, highly intellectual, and dysfunctional home (fundamentalist and highly intellectual?).
- ▶ Being an ordained and licensed minister (Baptist and Mennonite).
- ▶ Multiple masters and **two** ABD's. Having no earned doctorate has brought me much internal and some external grief and shame.
- ▶ I taught and was a director of counseling services at suspect institutions like Liberty University and Northeastern Bible College.
- ▶ I taught and was a director of counseling at wonderful institutions like Liberty University and Northeastern Bible College.
- ▶ I am haunted by a strong sense of being less-than.
- ▶ I inherited genes from two prolific writers and speakers – did I mention the dysfunction? Home was fighting and chaos.
- ▶ I remember everything I read yet cannot remember where I put one of my many pairs of glasses or anyone's name.

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What was the subject/topic of this speech to approximately 500 people?



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The talk was about school district leadership and the tribes into which school administrators are often divided, resulting in diminished student learning! I began with my experience in tribal West Africa to lay the foundation for my thesis (and to make them laugh). Laughing facilitates learning in my experience!

The **In**gredients in the Recipe for being an Effective Independent Scholar:

The Successful Independent Scholar is:

Interesting – *Knows that facts can certainly be made compelling;*

Insightful – *Finds meaning and significance where others may not;*

Intelligent – *Adding wisdom to intellect makes someone intelligent;*

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The Successful Independent Scholar is:

Informed – Keeps up-to-date - is a voracious reader;

Inquisitive – Is driven to know and understand . . .

Intentional – Is focused - neither impotent nor impatient;

Integrational – Uses all available resources in one's life experiences. Helps others find commonalities to overcome differences;

Inner-Driven – Being self-aware without being self-absorbed;

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The Successful Independent Scholar is:

Industrious – Very hard working, tireless in approach;

Innovative – A thinker of new paradigms not bound by tradition;

Intimate – Share yourself, be open, vulnerable, and aware of your client's, audience's, or reader's needs and wants;

Interdependent – Seek and depend on other's viewpoints – like the *Inklings* – JRR Tolkien, CS Lewis, Charles Williams, and others;

Inspirational – Persuasive and motivational in writings and speaking;

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The Successful Independent Scholar has:

Initiative – Is a self-starter and self-motivator. Takes the lead when there is no one there to follow;

Income – Controls expenses and creates needed revenue for the purpose at hand (*entrepreneur* is not a dirty word);

Intuition – Being able to see in the dark what others can only see in the light;

Inventory – Takes stock of available resources; both strengths and weaknesses;

Ingenuity – Making use of innate (inborn) talent or resources;

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The Successful Independent Scholar has:

Integrity – Being grounded, having a strong inner compass;

Influence – Is able to motivate listeners and readers to action;

Infundibula 😊 - Latin term for funnel-shaped cavities into which you pour and store all your experiences and learnings for future use.

The independent scholar is first and foremost a teacher, usually without a fixed classroom. The independent scholar finds her classroom wherever she roams in life. Sometimes in one month he teaches in El Paso twice, Mexico City, Salt Lake City, and yes, even in Amherst. The independent scholar's classroom is truly the world!

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- ▶ My most admired Danish physicist, philosopher, atheist, and fan of theologian Søren Kierkegaard is **Neils Bohr** (1885-1962). The following quote by him is one of my favorites:

The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. The opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth

- ▶ My hope for each of you:

May all your statements be correct, all your profound truths be humbly held, and may each of you make cautious use of the absolutism that Peter Enns calls “the sin of certainty.”

Amen and Amen.