My Life in 7 Pages

From your earliest days on Pea Ridge Road, your life has been a testament to resilience, relentless self-improvement, and an innate entrepreneurial drive, evolving from fundamental self-sufficiency to pioneering advancements in complex information systems.

A Foundation Forged in Farm Life

Your journey began in a **rural, agricultural setting** near Water Valley, Kentucky, where self-reliance was paramount. From the age of five to eleven, you were significantly involved in **building your new family home by hand** with a paternal grandfather, learning foundational principles of using tools for their purpose and meticulous maintenance. This hands-on experience instilled a deep understanding of practical construction and resourcefulness.

Life on the farm meant constant labor. Your family operated a small dairy with **five to ten milk cows**, a demanding daily chore until the late 1960s when small-scale dairying became economically unviable without industrial setups. To adapt, your family shifted to raising market hogs and growing various row crops. Additionally, a **one-acre vegetable garden** was maintained annually, with much of the produce canned or dry-stored for winter, demonstrating intensive labor and self-sufficiency. Your personal responsibility for the cistern, which supplied potable water delivered by truck every month or two, further highlighted the family's resourcefulness. Though the newly built home initially lacked modern amenities, it gradually evolved with the addition of a well, a kitchen sink with a pump in 1970, and an indoor bathroom by 1972, all through your family's diligent efforts.

Beyond the family farm, you were **encouraged to work for others**, earning your own income from jobs like working in tobacco fields, hauling hay, and building fences. This early financial independence fostered a work-for-reward mindset. At age twelve, you launched your **first business**: selling a pig received as a birthday present to buy a gas-powered push mower. You then started cutting lawns for churches and cemeteries, **pushing that mower for miles on gravel roads** to the point of wearing out two sets of wheels. This demonstrated exceptional early entrepreneurial drive and perseverance.

Your early interest in electronics was sparked by your father's former repair shop. This passion was further ignited by a paternal uncle, who was taking an electronics course. At age eight or nine, you would **secretly access the uncle's workspace**, reading his books, watching instructional videos, and experimenting with breadboarding projects. This self-directed learning, complemented by reading a popular electronics magazine, provided a crucial technical foundation. The paternal grandmother also provided an early example of entrepreneurial spirit

through her hobbies of growing award-winning flowers and raising and selling birds, shipping them to distant cities via "Railway Express".

Forging Discipline in the USMC

Your practical skills and thirst for knowledge continued to shape your path through your high school years. In your senior year (1975-1976), you balanced studying Industrial Electricity at a vocational school with a full-time night job at a tobacco warehouse. Demonstrating your hands-on mechanical aptitude, you **repaired a broken-down car** to enable your commute. Despite aspirations to become an electronics engineer, financial barriers to college were significant. An attempt to secure an appointment to a Naval Academy, despite a strong academic test score, proved unsuccessful due to the intense competition.

A pivotal moment occurred when accompanying a friend to meet a recruiter. Discovering that Marine Corps electronics schools emphasized **"component-level repair with engineering-level math,"** aligning perfectly with your desire for in-depth technical training, you made the life-changing decision to join the U.S. Marine Corps Delayed Entry Program in November 1975, a choice influenced by a paternal grandfather's counsel.

After completing recruit training at Parris Island in September 1976, where you realized the mental fortitude required for military life, you were assigned to advanced electronics schools in Twentynine Palms, California. Your cross-country journey to California, in a used car acquired from your father, was marked by an unexpected act of **kindness from a radiator shop owner** who repaired your vehicle for free, asking only for a promise to "help someone else in need someday". During your time in California, you excelled in your electronics training, advancing to specialized areas like aviation communications and cryptographic equipment repair. A decision to get a "USMC" tattoo on your left forearm, a common display of camaraderie, later **unexpectedly disqualified you from highly desired embassy duty** due to strict appearance regulations.

Your first operational assignment was to the Tactical Air Command Center at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, a critical Cold War-era post involved in air defense and intercepting adversarial aircraft. This period included demanding readiness exercises and a memorable NATO cruise in 1978 to the Shetland Islands, where you transported communications equipment by sea.

In late 1978, you reenlisted for Advanced Tech School, strategically negotiating a bonus and a guaranteed promotion to Sergeant (E-5) upon meeting time-in-grade requirements. This tactical negotiation proved crucial later in your career. You excelled at the advanced school, graduating first in your class in March 1980. Assigned to a Marine Air Control Squadron unit in Quantico, Virginia, you quickly proved your leadership by **inheriting a troubled electronics shop** in "terrible administrative condition" and, with the help of your skilled technicians, turned it around

to pass inspection within six months. The unit's training needs led to frequent deployments to Dam Neck, Virginia, providing valuable weekday off-time. In December 1981, you were promoted to Staff Sergeant (E-6), narrowly making the selection from the "youngest time in grade" group, a direct benefit of your earlier promotion timing.

However, this period was also marked by personal challenges, including a tense home life that led to separation from a partner in August 1982. To manage ongoing financial responsibilities, you took on a night job as a telephone solicitor. The birth of a son in September 1983, coupled with an impending unaccompanied overseas assignment, forced a significant career decision. A connection to a reserve officer led to an interview at Gould Defense Industries. Opting for stability and proximity to your new family, you decided to leave active duty in December 1983, transferring to the inactive reserve, and beginning a new civilian role as an **engineering technician in an undersea sonar lab** in Maryland.

Your civilian career at Gould began with a challenging R&D project that was behind schedule, a task you "loved" due to its complexity. However, an unfulfilled promotion promise from a departing manager led to dissatisfaction. In a bold move in August 1984, you took two weeks of vacation, moved your family to Union City, Tennessee, and **secured five job offers in five days**. You accepted a position at Lowrance Sound and Communications, a small local company specializing in sound systems and radio communications installations. Missing the Marine Corps life and prestige, you joined an active Reserve unit at NAS Millington, Tennessee, in late 1984. In April 1985, a unique opportunity arose: your unit would take over airfield operations during a major radar system rehabilitation. Offered a three-year active duty contract, including radar school, you accepted, seeing a path back to leadership and continued career progression.

Pioneering Entrepreneurial Ventures

Your return to active duty at NAS Millington in April 1985 provided the platform for significant entrepreneurial and technical pursuits. You identified a common problem in the unit: nobody knew how to leverage the newly acquired CP/M-based S-100 microcomputer. Seizing the initiative, you **taught yourself dBase II** and built practical databases for tracking repair parts, maintenance, and work schedules, significantly improving squadron efficiency. This self-driven learning extended to your home life, where you acquired an IBM-compatible machine and a 2400 baud modem, connecting to early online bulletin board systems, which **"skyrocketed" your software learning**. You discovered and utilized the Clipper compiler, accelerating the performance of your applications.

A friend connected you with an individual who ran a small business machine company in the Memphis area, servicing local businesses. Recognizing a mutual benefit, you formed a **partnership, installing Lantastic networks**. This partnership led to a major achievement: **Memphis's first Novell Network Certification**, which expanded your client base from small

businesses to corporations, demonstrating successful business growth and adaptation to emerging technologies.

Building on your experience with Clipper, you identified a widespread need among developers for tools to write better, faster database-driven software. Collaborating with a friend, you brainstormed and developed **ClipCASE**, a Computer-Aided Software Engineering (CASE) tool for Clipper developers, eventually selling your share in late 1992 or early 1993. This venture, though you were disappointed by the subsequent acquisition of Clipper by a larger company, showcased your ability to **identify market needs and create innovative solutions**.

Still on continuous active duty as a reservist in the early 1990s, you officially took on the role of MAG Training Chief, but effectively **managed all computer systems** for the Marine Air Group at Millington. You designed, purchased, and installed a **Novell server and network** to connect all the disparate PCs and integrated it with the mainframe using a 3270 interface. Recognizing that the mainframe was often down during weekend training, you ingeniously built an application to queue jobs locally and populate mainframe data when the connection was restored. This innovation earned your Commanding Officer recognition and led to you being awarded a **Navy Marine Corps Achievement Award**. This period also saw you achieve a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering Technology through distance learning in January 1995. You were also promoted to Master Sergeant (E-8) in 1994.

In late 1994, facing involuntary separation due to military base closures, you discovered a **"little known clause"** in the law protecting service members with significant active duty time. Through extensive advocacy to senior officers and politicians, you secured an extension, leading to a new assignment as a Reserve Liaison at a Recruit Depot in San Diego, California, in December 1994. Here, you again identified inefficiencies in paperwork and applied your database skills to **automate processes**, implementing a "enter once and print many" system. You ultimately left active duty in April 1997, completing over 20 years of service, followed by a medical hold until August 1998.

After military retirement, you returned to Union City, Tennessee, seeking to reconnect with family. After an initial job as an electronics maintenance technician, you secured a position in the **IT department at a Baptist Hospital** in late 1998. This role, though initially frustrating due to a "Microsoft centered, corporate nightmare" environment resistant to open source and Linux, proved to be **life-changing**. Driven by your long-standing adherence to the **Free Software movement** and interest in Linux, you began exploring open source solutions for healthcare. Identifying a void, you took the initiative to develop an **open source practice management system** you named **"FreePM"**. Initially built with Python and PostgreSQL, you soon shifted to the Zope Content Management System and its Object Database, finding it better suited for complex data relations than traditional SQL structures. A collaboration with a former Marine and open source advocate from a software company further solidified FreePM's development.

FreePM gained significant attention after you published an article in an online Linux magazine, leading to a workshop in Toronto in November 1999. Out of this, you **co-founded the "Open Source Healthcare Alliance" (OSHCA)** with a collaborator, formalizing efforts to promote open source in healthcare. FreePM's visibility on a public software repository attracted an angel investor group from Miami. You left the hospital in early 2000 to pursue FreePM full-time. However, in early 2002, when investors pressured for premature deployment at a children's hospital, you **refused to sign the agreement**, prioritizing patient safety and your "allergy to litigation" over financial gain. This principled stand led to investors recalling promises and funds drying up, effectively ending your involvement with FreePM. You then took a job as an assistant manager at a local auto parts store, a practical step during a period of immense personal and professional upheaval. During this period, you also managed your independent consulting under an entity called Open Paradigms, LLC. You earned a Master of Science degree (with Merit) in Health Informatics through distance learning in June 2006.

The Quest for S3Model

Your commitment to open source principles and a profound "allergy to litigation" critically shaped your next major venture. In 2009, a **key figure in a prominent open health informatics organization** publicly mused about changing the licensing for a foundational specification to a proprietary model. This directly conflicted with your deep-seated belief in open source. Already sensing a need to move beyond the existing framework due to perceived limitations, this event became a **major catalyst**.

In response, you and a research partner **downloaded the existing open source assets**, effectively "freezing" them under their current license. This act led to the birth of the **"Multi-Level Health Information Modeling" (MLHIM) project** in 2009. You immediately began making "wholesale changes" to the specifications, quickly developing a framework that was hardly recognizable compared to its origin. You consciously moved towards more robust and widely accepted serialization formats, choosing **XML Schema** (a W3C specification) despite having limited initial experience with its nuances. Your unique approach to schema development, though rule-compliant, was initially unfamiliar to others, compelling you to **master a new level of the XML Schema specification**.

Based in Brazil from March 2008 as a visiting researcher at a federal university, you became a central figure in the local health informatics scene. You organized and led the **"First Workshop on Open Source Health Informatics Projects"** in Niterói in 2008, promoting your Python-based open source implementation (OSHIP) and fostering a new community of developers in Brazil. Your expertise was recognized internationally, leading to collaborations on an NIH grant proposal to integrate genomic information into electronic health records using open models and an inference engine. You continually onboarded new developers and collaborators, providing detailed guidance on the complex technologies involved. You also engaged in

high-level discussions regarding **national-level governance for archetype certification and localization** in Brazil, recognizing the policy complexities required for widespread adoption.

As MLHIM evolved, you continued to advocate for open, pragmatic solutions, often critiquing established standards organizations for their perceived lack of practical implementations and resistance to truly open approaches. Your interactions with key figures in the open health informatics community, including those you had previously helped establish, highlighted ongoing debates about open source integrity and the challenges of scaling innovation within bureaucratic structures. Despite personal struggles, your **intellectual engagement remained unwavering**, constantly refining MLHIM's technical underpinnings and promoting its benefits.

Recognizing that the core semantic data problems extended beyond healthcare, you and your research partner decided to generalize your work, leading to the development of **S3Model in 2017**. S3Model, built on the learnings from MLHIM and previous experiences, was designed to be **"completely cross-domain,"** offering a bottom-up modeling capability and leveraging off-the-shelf tools for data manipulation. Its underlying data model supports cross-domain information management, providing a foundation for sharable, syntactically valid, and semantic models.

This ongoing "quest for truth" in information science, addressing the fundamental challenge of turning data into knowledge, remains your driving force. After an accident in Brazil in 2019 and a period of personal reflection, you returned to the United States. Now, you continue to apply your problem-solving mindset and extensive experience in **civic engagement**, serving as the chair of a city Planning and Zoning Commission and actively participating in local political advocacy. Your life's trajectory, from a self-reliant farmboy to a globally recognized expert constantly pushing the boundaries of interoperable information systems, exemplifies a continuous pursuit of impact and an unwavering commitment to open principles. Your story is a testament to how foundational skills and self-sufficiency, honed from a young age, can foster an indomitable entrepreneurial spirit that seeks to solve complex problems and contribute meaningfully to the world.