

This memoir traces the arc of a life shaped by discipline, inquiry, misjudgement, recalibration, and commitment. From a Free State farm to military deployment, from applied physics to unfinished theoretical questions, from inherited belief to examined conviction — it is a record not of perfection, but of progression.

The Arc

A Memoir of Structure,
Inquiry, and Commitment

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I. PROLOGUE — THE ARC

This is not a catalogue of events.

It is an arc.

- An arc of place and discipline.
- Of love and misjudgement.
- Of belief and its undoing.
- Of science, war, ambition, recalibration.
- Of becoming.

It traces the movement from boyhood landscapes to operational deployment, from emotional dislocation to discipline, from applied physics to unfinished theoretical questions, from inherited belief systems to examined conviction, from romantic intensity to chosen commitment.

It is written not to explain, but to record.

This memoir is not written as confession, defence, or declaration. It is an attempt to trace the arc of a life — personal, professional, and intellectual — as it unfolded across places, disciplines, relationships, and convictions.

Now, in my mid-sixties, I find myself looking less for dramatic turning points and more for structural continuity. The distance of time allows certain patterns to become visible — not as triumph or failure, but as progression.

The narrative moves from a farm in the Free State to military service, from disrupted school performance to academic reconstruction, from applied medical physics to unanswered questions in theoretical physics. Along the way there were relationships that formed and dissolved, beliefs that were held and later relinquished, ambitions that were redirected, and responsibilities that reshaped direction.

The intention is not to justify choices or settle unfinished conversations. It is to understand the structure that gradually emerged — how discipline followed disorientation, how inquiry replaced certainty, and how unfinished questions became part of the architecture rather than its weakness.

What follows is not a chronology, but a narrative of progression. It is written to clarify the line that connects early solitude, professional development, relational complexity, and ongoing intellectual curiosity.

Some chapters are complete. Others remain open.

The arc itself is the point.

II. A LIFE BUILT IN STRUCTURE

I grew up on a farm in the Free State, in a landscape shaped not by spectacle but by space. The land was hard and open. Dolerite ridges rose dark against the sky. I climbed them alone, often without anyone knowing where I was. There were no sandstone canyons then, no tiger sanctuary as the place is known today — only rock, wind, and silence.

Solitude there was not loneliness. It was grounding. The stone beneath my hands was solid. The horizon stretched without interruption. That landscape taught me something before I had language for it: steadiness is not given; it is found.

School told a different story.

For years I performed well without effort. Learning came easily. Then, during the final stretch of my school years, something shifted internally. It was not intellectual decline. It was emotional dislocation — the quiet destabilisation of feeling deeply and not knowing how to carry it when it was not returned. There are forms of disappointment that do not announce themselves publicly. They simply drain structure from what once felt certain.

My final school marks did not reflect capacity. They reflected imbalance.

Beyond the farm, another world opened near the Orange River, close to the Gariiep Dam. A friend lived there, and during our final school years I visited him one weekend. His girlfriend was there — and with her, a friend from another town.

Something shifted quietly that weekend.

We fell in love with the clarity only youth permits — unguarded, unquestioned. Weekends became islands of light. I spent time on her parents' farm, walked fields that were not mine, sat at tables where I felt unexpectedly welcomed. Her father once said I felt like a son to him. At an age when I felt increasingly distant from my own home, that sentence settled deeply.

The relationship carried into my early months in uniform. But distance has its own erosion. Without drama, what had begun gently came to rest.

Those years revealed something I did not yet fully possess: structure. Not intellectual structure — that had always been there — but emotional structure. The kind that allows capacity and feeling to coexist without undoing each other.

- The farm had given solitude.
- Young love had given tenderness.
- Earlier disappointment had given disorientation.
- The army would give discipline.

III. JUNGLE GREEN

Military service was not symbolic. It was real.

I completed infantry leadership training, earned rank, and extended my service to three years, including operational deployment in an active war zone. Men I knew died. I came under fire. Leadership did not wait for emotional readiness.

War compresses a person. It strips away abstraction. You are reduced to responsibility and reaction.

And yet, even within that compression, fragments of ordinary humanity surfaced. There were stolen weekends away from uniform. There were city nights in Germiston where tenderness and intimacy briefly interrupted conflict. Those moments did not erase danger, but they reminded me that beneath command and survival, a man still existed.

With modest school results behind me, I completed infantry leadership training and made the decision to extend my service by an additional year. That extension created the stability necessary to enrol remotely for a first-year BSc through UNISA. There was no campus life attached to it — only work, discipline, and study. Those two years quietly reopened doors I had assumed were closed. They proved something essential: the earlier decline had not been incapacity.

- The army imposed external structure. It steadied what school had unsettled.
- When my service ended, I did not drift. I used that structure deliberately.

IV. STELLENBOSCH — FORMATION

Stellenbosch was where adulthood began in earnest.

There was a first date, with a Rag queen finalist — not dramatic, not defining, but marked by warmth and generosity — an early sign that nervous courage could be met with kindness. A small but decisive beginning in a life I was still learning to inhabit.

There were almost-relationships and misalignments. Closeness without future. Youthful mistakes that revealed more about timing than intention.

Then came the relationship that defined my student years.

It was deep and sincere. It lasted more than a year. What was unmistakable, however, was the intellectual alignment. Conversation moved easily and deeply. I have rarely experienced that degree of intellectual resonance again, and its absence in later years was something I quietly noticed.

It did not end cleanly. There were attempts to repair, to return, to translate feeling into permanence.

I knew even then that aspects of my own behaviour were contributing to fracture. There were pressures neither of us fully articulated. Words spoken with certainty — promises of permanence — met realities neither of us yet had the experience to interpret.

When it ended, it surprised me in its finality, though not in its causes.

The foundation was not misalignment. It was incapacity — mine especially — to manage what was already under strain.

Contact lingered long after it ended. Not because of unresolved passion, but because some bonds fade slowly. Time moved forward. Life unfolded.

There are conversations we never fully had. I no longer believe they would have altered what followed, but clarity has value of its own. Time has a way of maturing the space between people. If such a conversation ever arose, I suspect it would feel different now.

Another serious relationship followed — steadier, less turbulent. It lasted more than a year and taught a different lesson: sincerity is not the same as alignment. Affection without shared direction eventually exhausts itself.

Music ran through those years — not as background, but as interpretation. Songs did not decorate memory; they clarified it.

Stellenbosch did not leave me disillusioned.

It left me discerning.

Not every connection is meant to endure. Some exist to refine discernment.

Stellenbosch taught me that emotional depth alone does not guarantee alignment. It also taught me that intellectual development can coexist with emotional immaturity — and that the latter eventually demands attention.

V. CAPE TOWN AND RECALIBRATION

When my Stellenbosch chapter ended, the next step was practical: work. I moved to Cape Town and began what felt like a different life — less shaped by lectures and residences, more by routines, responsibility, and the quiet pressure of earning a living.

Before starting employment, I completed a month of refresher military training on the Cape Flats — a brief return to uniform before stepping fully into civilian life.

A relationship from my later student years reached its ending during that time. The closure was not caused by relocation; the relationship had already exhausted its meaning. Transitions do not always break things — sometimes they simply reveal what has already been ending.

Not long after, another relationship took shape. It was generous and serious, lasting fifteen months. But we both carried unfinished elements of ourselves into it. It ended not through crisis, but recognition.

Cape Town gave me independence. It also clarified something else — that my academic story was not finished, even if my student years in Stellenbosch were.

I respected Electronic Engineering. But respect is not vocation. The question returned quietly but persistently: if not this, then what?

The answer had always been there.

Physics.

VI. BLOEMFONTEIN — REALIGNMENT

I enrolled at the University of the Free State to study Physics and Mathematics.

This was not reaction; it was correction.

I worked methodically. In the second semester of my third year, I achieved 100% in Mathematics. Earlier, I had achieved 100% in Electromagnetic Field Theory. These were not moments of brilliance — they were confirmations of alignment.

I completed the degree efficiently and entered an Honours programme in Medical Physics. There, effort and outcome converged fully. I graduated with distinction and received the Dean's Medal as the top Honours student in the Faculty.

It did not feel like triumph. It felt like resolution.

During the same period, life unfolded unevenly.

I became engaged. It did not hold. I later married. The marriage lasted five years. When it ended, it ended clearly. It was not a failure of character, but a misalignment recognised.

Precision in equations does not guarantee precision in partnership.

Life rarely aligns across all domains at once.

VII. BELIEF AND RELEASE

My father died when I was sixteen. He was highly intellectual. Our differences would not have been about intelligence, but about foundations — religion, moral structure, the interpretation of the world.

Even as a teenager, I sensed my questions were moving beyond the framework he inhabited. We never had the opportunity to test those differences openly. Life closed that dialogue before either of us had fully formed.

During my time in Cape Town and my early years in Bloemfontein, I immersed myself deeply in Christianity — sincerely, searching for answers to the question that had followed me since adolescence: *Why are we here?*

For a time, it made sense. I practiced fully. I believed sincerely. But doubt was never absent. When I spoke openly with those who seemed spiritually advanced, I discovered that doubt was not unique to me. It was simply better concealed.

The decisive shift came later, during my marriage. I found myself deeply unhappy and confronted by a question I could no longer avoid: if circumstances unfold according to divine will, what does that imply about responsibility?

I realised something simpler and more demanding: I was in this situation because of my own choices.

The framework of providence collapsed under that recognition. Not in anger, but in clarity. The final decision felt sudden. The build-up had been long. By the time it crystallised, the conclusion was unavoidable.

The departure was not rebellion. It was coherence.

It removed cognitive dissonance. It also sharpened my sensitivity to harm justified in the name of belief. I remain opposed to dogmatic certainty that causes harm. But my life is not defined by opposition.

It is defined by inquiry.

VIII. RUSSIA — CHOICE

After the divorce, Russia entered my life not as escape, but as openness.

An unexpected connection led me to Yoshkar-Ola in the republic of Mari-El in Russia.

I met Natasha, a woman whose presence could turn heads anywhere — warm, expressive, strikingly beautiful.

A relationship grew there that might have led to remarriage. She loved deeply. The possibility was real.

I travelled there, and for a time, the future felt tangible — shared, reachable, plausible.

But affection is not compatibility.

I ended it — not because it lacked warmth, but because it lacked alignment.

IX. EUROPE — BETWEEN DIRECTIONS

An IAEA fellowship took me to Belgium, to the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. It was a period of research, transition, and international collaboration. Professionally, it marked expansion. Personally, it felt like a threshold — neither origin nor destination.

Before leaving continental Europe for the UK permanently, I travelled to St Petersburg. I had long been drawn to its history — to revolution, to ideas reshaping nations. While there, I met two women. With one, affection grew naturally and without strain. It held promise, but time imposed its limit. The ending came not through conflict or misalignment, but through circumstance — a boundary set by distance neither of us could alter.

After relocating to the UK, I travelled to Nikolaev and Odessa in Ukraine. Music, sea air, connection, possibility — another chapter opened. Affection was real. Alignment, perhaps the strongest I had known, was present.

But something essential was absent.

The intensity — the unforced pull — the quiet certainty that no alternative needed to be considered — was not there.

I chose not to extend what, in every structural sense, could have worked.

When certain songs play, I am reminded how different a life might look had one turned at another moment.

Not regret.

Awareness.

Every decision excludes another version of reality.

These were not phases of romantic excess. They were stages in learning the difference between compatibility and conviction.

Choice matured.

X. KIEV — COMMITMENT

In 2004, in Kiev, I met Olena.

There was no dramatic revelation — only clarity.

We travelled to Crimea. Those days remain among the most extraordinary of our lives. The connection was not fragile. It was decisive.

She later came to the UK. Living together introduced adjustment — friction, difference, negotiation — the ordinary realities that follow intensity. But the core remained intact.

I chose marriage consciously, not impulsively.

We married in January 2005. We are still married. We have a daughter who has just turned eighteen.

Marriage has not been flawless. It has required adaptation — including learning when not to react. My instinct has often been to respond when I feel pressure. Maturity has meant learning when to let friction dissipate rather than escalate.

What endures is not romance alone, but commitment tested and retained.

XI. ACADEMIC RECONSTRUCTION AND CONTINUITY

My academic path did not unfold in a straight line.

What began as uncertainty in school years gradually consolidated into direction. Engineering had been a starting point. Physics became the centre.

The years in Bloemfontein confirmed that realignment. From there, the trajectory stabilised.

I entered an Honours Degree in Medical Physics and completed a Master's degree. The discipline that began in uniform matured into sustained academic coherence.

Medical Physics was not my original intellectual love. It was the pragmatic path that allowed study and income to coexist. Without it, I might not have remained in physics at all.

While working at the University of the Free State and in medical physics roles, I added Computer Science as a third major — including early exposure to Artificial Intelligence. I wrote substantial code over the years. Structure attracted me wherever it lived.

Before leaving South Africa, I enrolled for a PhD — not from pressure, but from internal necessity. Circumstances delayed its beginning.

In the UK, I pursued it alongside professional work, supported by a manager who made that possible.

The PhD did not feel like ascent.

It felt like completion.

Across my career, I have been connected — in one form or another — to seven universities in three countries, moving through classrooms, research units, international collaboration, and teaching.

- Achievement was never about status.
- It was about internal coherence.

XII. PHYSICS — PROFESSION AND BEYOND

Medical Physics became my profession.

It is applied physics — rigorous, practical, consequential. It has contributed to transformative medical technologies — advanced imaging such as CT and MRI, nuclear medicine scans such as PET and SPECT, as well as radiotherapy and radionuclide therapy. At a small scale, I have contributed to developments in radionuclide therapy — work still in early evolution but which has extreme promise.

Applied physics shaped my career.

But foundational questions never disappeared.

After hearing a statement by Stephen Hawking, something ignited. I developed a hypothesis addressing the measurement problem in quantum mechanics — exploring whether wavefunction collapse does not occur, but only appears to occur due to observational limitation within a restricted space–time topology. It intersects conceptually with string-theoretic topology, though it requires substantial further development.

I wrote it down and shared it with two friends: one long-standing, and another whose intellect I deeply respect and with whom sustained intellectual exchange has always been possible.

- It may never be tested.
- It may never be cited.
- It was still worth writing.

Had my career path been unconstrained by financial necessity, I might have pursued foundational theoretical physics directly rather than applied physics. Instead, I chose sustainability — and through it, continuity.

The theoretical work is not abandoned.

It is paused.

To progress it properly would require mastering additional mathematical structures and topological frameworks I was never formally trained in. That work remains possible — but deferred.

XIII. CONTINUATION

Life did not freeze at completion.

My wife runs an export textile business connecting markets in Russia and Ukraine. The invasion of 2022 and subsequent sanctions disrupted it severely. Adaptation continues. Workspaces are being redesigned. Strategies are being restructured.

I remain professionally active — building Radiation Protection Advisor and MRI Safety Expert portfolios, expanding standing, managing obligations.

Time is occupied.

Theoretical work waits.

That chapter is not closed.

Only deferred.

XIV. INTEGRATION

Looking back, I see no single defining triumph.

There were failures — sometimes many. There were misjudgements. There were tensions I learned to manage rather than eliminate.

But over time, structure prevailed.

- The farm gave solitude.
- The army gave discipline.
- Academia gave coherence.
- Relationships gave calibration.
- Loss gave humility.
- Inquiry gave direction.

I no longer seek confrontation. I seek clarity.

I no longer seek certainty. I seek alignment.

Some chapters closed without full explanation.

Others matured slowly.

A few remain deliberately open.

The arc is not a claim of perfection.

It is a record of progression.

And it continues.

EPILOGUE

This is the arc:

Stone.

Young love.

War.

Discipline.

Love.

Loss.

Discernment.

Belief.

Release.

Science.

Commitment.

Unfinished questions.

Not everything was optimal.

Not everything was wise.

Not everything was understood in real time.

But it was chosen.

And it is owned.