My parents always encouraged self-sufficiency and self-teaching in our home. As a child, I would often ask them for the meanings of new words. I was always met with a nod to our two large dictionaries and a reminder of my ability to read. As time progressed, I came to embrace learning and self-teaching to satisfy my infinite curiosity.

All Army weapon storage rooms require an S&G 951 high-security padlock per regulations. Months into my efforts to establish my unit’s arms room, our lock finally arrived. In one accidental turn of the maintenance key, a Soldier inadvertently separated the lock into pieces that refused to recombine. Ever-curious, I troubleshot and disassembled the lock more. Springs, pins, and tumblers flew everywhere.

I combed the internet, consuming everything I could find about disassembling and repairing locks. This design allowed for 46,656 different pin orientations. I only had a computer repair tool kit and duct tape. Miraculously, I emerged 10 hours later with a working lock. My intellectual curiosity got me into that scenario, but thankfully also got me out.