

Adam M. Dean



Adam M. Dean is an attorney in West Virginia and individual with a disability. He has written both fiction and non-fiction publications. Adam was born with cerebral palsy but that didn't slow him down one bit. He's traveled the world, made some good friends, written some great books, and had some fantastic experiences. But unfortunately, he has also dealt with stereotypes and stigmas because of his disability. Here are 9 questions with Adam Dean.

I. Jeremiah: Tell me about your personal story. (upbringing, education, your life as a person with a disability...)

Adam: I was born in Huntington and raised in Kenova, which is a "bedroom" suburb. My father Hugh Dean was a counselor with the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitative Services, and my mother Rae Dean was a teller, loan servicer, and insurance agent with First Bank of Ceredo and then United Bank. I have two older sisters, Barbara and Deana (who is now deceased).

I went to Kenova Elementary School, Ceredo-Kenova Middle School, and Ceredo-Kenova High School. I graduated high school with very high honors. I went to college at Marshall University in Huntington, graduating in three years (in 1997) with a Bachelor's of Arts degree in political science with high honors. I went to law school at West Virginia University College of Law in Morgantown, completing my studies there in 2000. I graduated the Order of the Coif (top 10% of the class) in May of 2000. I went to work as a writ clerk at the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals in Charleston in August of 2000 and have been there ever since.

I received my first augmentative speech device ("communicator") from the Prentke Romich Company when I was in fifth grade, through the Division of Rehabilitative Services. The Division of Rehabilitative Services and/or Medicaid paid for each communicator up until around 2010.

Five years later, in 2015 and 2016, was the first that the Division of Rehabilitative Services and Medicaid did not purchase the communicator. I received that communicator, which is the most recent, through my insurance coverage with PEIA. I would like to thank Teresa Dubovsky of Assistive Technology Works and my friends, Jeanette Love and Adriana Love Marshall for all their efforts in helping me complete the paperwork necessary to obtain the communicator through PEIA. Teresa was the facilitator, Jeanette was the speech therapist who did the report, and Adriana was the person (along with her husband Jon) who let us use their house to meet. Of course, before his death in 2014, my dad Hugh, with his experience as a rehabilitation counselor, was invaluable in being able to get me available services through the Division. Also, my best friends Lee Green and Neil Johnson both learned finger spelling, so we could talk without my having to use a communicator. Lee and I still use finger spelling to communicate. Although, none of us learned sign language.

II. Jeremiah: What inspired you to go to law school?

Adam: I've always enjoyed reading about history, government, and politics. So, I've always wanted to be a lawyer. My parents also thought the law would be a good profession for me given the physical limitations I have (a weaker right side, a limp on my right side, and minimum use of my right arm). I've been a lawyer for nineteen years now. I can say I love being a lawyer. I also love my job at the state supreme court. As a general writ clerk, I help draft memorandum decisions in civil appeals in which the appellant is a pro se litigant, i.e., a person without a lawyer representing them.

III. Jeremiah: How did you become an author?

Adam: My brother-in-law Rich Ossias (Barb's husband) wrote a book called E-I-E-I-OY!: How I Became a Jewish Farmer in Middletown, America with a print on-demand publisher called PublishAmerica. I published my first three books (all

fiction) with PublishAmerica. They all are now out-of-print. Rich's father Morris Ossias later self-published a book called *Up Yours, Georgie!* on Amazon's CreateSpace platform. So, after I wrote *Perfect Love: An Ordinary Person's Thoughts on Christianity*, I self-published that book (my first non-fiction work) with CreateSpace. So, you could say I come from an extended family of self-professed authors. Rich and Morris (whom I've met once) are great people.

IV. Jeremiah: What motivates you write?

Adam: I've always been fascinated with becoming an author. I also think I have a unique prospective to offer as an individual with a disability. I recently republished my second book, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, under the new title *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Shanghai Hilton* with Kindle Direct Publishing (which CreateSpace has merged into). Although *Shanghai Hilton* is fiction, the story involves a person with my disability (cerebral palsy) traveling to Beijing and Shanghai, China, based on my own trip to those Chinese cities as a part of cultural exchange in March of 2002. It was a unique experience but one that offers insight into how we all interact with a different society and the individuals within it.

V. Jeremiah: Tell me about your books?

Adam: Of the two books that are currently in print, the main character in *Shanghai Hilton*, who has cerebral palsy, chokes in a restaurant due to the excess saliva in the mouth (which isn't uncommon), experiences communication difficulties while going to a Chinese doctor apart from the language barrier, and suffers what most people would consider discrimination in two situations--one situation where he is treated like he shouldn't ever be alone (in case he needs help) and another situation where he is treated dismissively. But, like myself, the main character thinks such experiences shouldn't be taken out of proportion of what actually happened. Every individual is mistreated at some point in their life. That's not peculiar to any one person, including a person with a disability.

I wrote *Perfect Love* following the deaths of my dad Hugh and sister Deana in 2014. I read the whole King James version of the Bible as well as the additional chapters that are considered canonical by the Catholic Church. In *Perfect Love*, I put forward my personal observations on the Christian faith after so many recent

deaths in my family (my mom's sister, Aunt Beth, died in May of 2015). The conclusion I reached was that the perfect love Jesus Christ personifies is comprised of three things: (1) the ability not only to love, but to be loved; (2) the courage to suffer; and (3) forgiveness—not only for others, but also for ourselves.

VI. Jeremiah: Besides what you already covered is there any particular message you wanted to deliver through your publications?

Adam: In two chapters in Perfect Love regarding sexual morality, one of my purposes was to disabuse able-bodied people of the notion that individuals with a disability are asexual. That notion is very unhelpful to someone like me, whose disability has nothing to do with my mental capacity or sexual function. I'm middle aged, or nearly there. I also enjoy sex and still would like to have a wife and kids someday. So, especially disabusing women of that notion is very important to me.

VII. Jeremiah: What did you learn when writing your books?

Adam: I enjoyed reading the whole Bible. Although I am a Protestant, I started going to Sacred Heart Catholic Church here in Charleston on Virginia Street (I have good friends who go there). Father Brian, who has since transferred to another part of the state, gave fine homilies on the importance of communion to the Catholic Faith. With all due respect to Father Brian's fine homilies, the Bible explicitly tells you what is most important: that you love the Lord and that you love others as you love Him. I think loving the Lord and loving others as you love Him means, as I've said, that you have: (1) the ability not only to love, but to be loved; (2) the courage to suffer; and (3) forgiveness—not only for others, but also for yourself.

VIII. Jeremiah: What was your biggest challenge when writing the books?

Adam: Proofreading. I've never been particularly good at it. Writing and editing books has given me additional practice. I hope I have become better at proofreading.

IX. Jeremiah: What's next?

Adam: I plan on continuing working for the state supreme court. I also try to go down to Kenova every weekend to see my mother Rae. She is still going strong but is 82 now. We have to make the most of the time we have with each other. As for writing additional books, I certainly will provided that I get another idea that's worth a book.

Adam's books can be found at www.adammdean.com.