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MEJ NEWSLETTER

*Learn as much by
writing as by reading.*

John Dalberg-Acton



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Peculiar Activities update

I received my first edits on April 12th. I appreciate [Ally Robertson's](#) efforts in editing and advising—much work to be done, but progress is encouraging. Moving forward, I intend to publish selected parts of the manuscript. This month, I've included the opening paragraphs of Chapter One.

It was a nice leather jacket—regrettably, its owner had lost his head. Cold case murders were my new responsibility, or so they told me. Even so, my third day as a detective found me at a park, standing next to not-so-cold body parts scattered along a creek's muddy bank. I took pictures, examined the area for evidence, and hurried back to my office, confident our coroner could pick up the pieces.

My office mate chattered all afternoon, insisting I learn of the various methods available to dismember a body. Five o'clock came, finally, and I headed out for a beer, finding one at Manny's Bar, the latest place to see or be seen in downtown Alexandria. The bar huddled in a row of renovated colonial buildings hosting restaurants, taverns, and whatnot shops. A purple neon "Manny's" sign flickered above a massive picture window, revealing booths and tables packed with customers sipping their happy-hour drinks.

I ventured inside and found two unclaimed barstools, their lime-green covers splitting from years of sliding, bouncing rear ends. Picking up a damp, tattered beer list, I climbed on a stool just as someone jostled me when taking the other. It seemed my new boss had decided to join me.



Check out the book trailer on the homepage of my website: mejbookslc.com

Please note that all pictures used in the video are mine or purchased through available resources.

Writing Conferences = Opportunities

In May 2019, I attended my first writers' conference, the [Oklahoma Writers' Federation, Inc.'s](#) annual meeting in Oklahoma City. I felt entirely out of place, but luckily, I knew a handful of people also attending. The sessions varied greatly in topics, which is ideal considering the variety of authors attending each year.

With encouragement from a writing class instructor, I entered the first two chapters of a new manuscript into the writing contest's mystery and suspense category. These two chapters were the beginning of what is now called *Peculiar Activities*. To my complete shock, I won first place in this category, giving me more encouragement to pursue the possibility of publishing my work-in-progress detective novel.

Conference workshops, speakers, and the banquet are among the best things to take part in, especially if you are a new author. The OWFI conference is all virtual again for 2021. Bridging the Epic Gap is this year's theme. For more information, please go here.

[Bridging the Epic Gap 2021 Virtual Conference — Oklahoma Writers' Federation, Inc. \(OWFI\)](#)

I can also recommend highly the annual [WriterCon](#) conference held each year during Labor Day Weekend at the Skirvin Hotel in Oklahoma City. [William Bernhardt](#) is a terrific author with his Ben Kincaid and Daniel Pike series of books (among many others). Even more, his fantastic organization skills are evident, as you will see if you attend the 2021 conference in downtown Oklahoma City. The dates this year are September 3-6.

New friends, new ideas, and better writing. Find a conference that fits you best.