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FRENCH CREEK PRESS JOSEPH KAUFMAN AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY
Full-Service Publishing House Shepherds Authors through Printing Cycle

JERUSALEM – Joseph Kaufman was born in 1955 in Pittsfield Massachusetts. Kaufman graduated with a degree in French literature from Bennington College where he was privileged to be a close student of Bernard Malamud. As a Peace Corp construction volunteer Kaufman lived in Togo, west Africa, for over 2 years, building schools and culvert bridges and small hospitals. Yeshiva and years working at the family business, marriage, and children prepared him for his current teaching passion.

A Good, Protected Life, Kaufman’s first novel, has more than 1000 copies in print. In writing his second novel, *The Legend of Cosmo and the Archangel*, Kaufman develops a style that speaks about choices and changes, and the different response each person can have to the same situations. He melds together the experience of Bennington College and the tutelage of Bernard Malamud, the Peace Corps in Africa, yeshiva in Israel, the years working for the family business.

Autobiography

My sisters would wear their best dress coats and I would brush my hair and wear a tie when my mother's parents, wealthy Jews from the City, neighbors of Marlene Dietrich on east 52nd street, sent a limousine to Pittsfield to gather us up. We were the country bumpkins of the family, exiled to the Berkshires after my mother married the son of a toy salesman who was, in this stern grandfather's pronouncement, “swarthy, with a prominent nose.” These grandparents’ apartment smelled like baked potatoes, the Little Rascals were on black-and-white TV, and there was a forbidding height down to the street where, when no was looking, I spit.

We were taken to museums, parks, Broadway shows, other places of betterment, expected to dress for dinner---no elbows allowed on tabletops---and often taken to the best restaurants of New York and expected to remember what the French or Spanish on the menus meant. Such sophistication only reinforced my sense of us as a segment of family exiled from True Life, relegated to the hillocks, lakes, woods, insects, and other infestations of rural Massachusetts. It took many years to appreciate the emotional health that was bestowed by being raised in what felt like a blue collar isolation tank and the simple activities of rural life: shimmying up trees, trout fishing, good country hardball, sandlot tackle football, skiing, sledding down the hermit’s driveway, ice skating in the city square, country fairs, spaghetti dinners at The Busy

Bee, steak sandwiches at The Rainbow. But, of course, there were the learned pleasures of country living, too: Tanglewood with the Boston Symphony and, one time, Duke Ellington, Melville's Arrowhead, Hawthorne's house in Lenox, the Berkshire Museum, the greater oddities of Alice's Restaurant, Mundy's bar, Officer Obie, Bonnie Raitt and Leo Kotke concerts at the Music Inn.

Like my father before me, I was born and raised in in this GE town of 40,000 where Jack Welch started out, located one hour west of Springfield and one hour east of Albany. I attended the same summer camp and high school as my father. My grandparents raised their children in Pittsfield and my great grandparents lived there as well. All of us so far--great-grandparents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins---are buried in the Pittsfield Cemetery. We have been living in the Berkshires for over 100 years, a rare statement for any Jew to be able to make.

Pittsfield remains an amalgam of Irish, Polish, Italian, WASP, and Jew. There remain the Elks, the Masons, the war veterans, and Pittsfield people are still very nice. My father's mother, who lived near us in Pittsfield, was a Yankee, a short woman of great stature who would not allow liquor into her house and refused to listen to a bad word about anyone, while my father, the son of this Jewish woman, is a retired, Calvinist-work-ethic businessman.

I inherited this work ethic if not that ban on alcohol, both of which served me well during the many-year writing of *The Legend of Cosmo and the Archangel*. The hours, the revisions, the heartache of rejections, the attempt to develop a style that could speak about many things in a deeper way---it all came partly from the experience of Bennington College and the tutelage of Bernard Malamud, the Peace Corps in Africa, yeshiva in Israel, the years working for my father at Kay Bee Toys. But even more than my post-Pittsfield life, the development of style is, in large part, the temperament that was forged from the pine and elm and barbecues of long-ago childhood, the lifelong sense of trying to punch my way out of Paradise.

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