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Joseph J. Kaufman: Renaissance Man

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Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself.

Jean-Paul Sartre

Joseph J. Kaufman was born in New Haven, Connecticut, on February 10, 1921 to Karl and Tiny Kaufman. The family moved shortly thereafter to open a millinery shop in Worcester, Massachusetts. As a child of first-generation Jewish Romanians, his life in Blue Collar, Worcester, was challenging. Kaufman and his friends took turns “on patrol” when walking home from school to protect themselves from anti-Semitic bullies.¹ His family stressed knowledge and scholarship, as well as music and sport. He excelled in Latin, French, and mathematics while harnessing his energy and athletic prowess through baseball, tennis, and fishing. From a very young age, Kaufman was a gifted pianist—a serious avocation that would continue throughout his life. After his cousin, Jerry Bodlander, a physician in Eagle Rock, California, drew him West, Kaufman enrolled at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1938.

A surgical career in mind, he majored in zoology and psychology at UCLA, but pursued creative interests through coursework in history and music. He worked summers as a janitor in a Worcester factory and saved enough money to buy a car. Maintaining a heavy scientific and liberal arts course load, he earned Phi Beta Kappa honors and performed laboratory research on the parasite *Diphyllabothrium latum*.¹ While playing tennis on campus, he met his classmate Phyllis Hordes and married just before graduation. He enrolled at the University of California, San Francisco for medical school in 1942 and finished in 3 years—not uncommon during World War II—with Alpha Omega Alpha honors. Moving to Boston after medical school in 1945, Kaufman took a surgical internship at Beth Israel under Charles G. Mixter, Jr. Joe and Phyllis had 2 children: Joanna, born in 1950, became a well-known landscape architect, and Phillip, born in 1953, specialized in horticulture. He would subsequently remarry. Two Boston interactions piqued his interest in urology: cutting edge research at Beth Israel in the emerging field of peritoneal

dialysis and befriending fellow trainee, Lester Persky—future chair of urology at Case Western Reserve University.

FROM THE NAVY TO UROLOGY

During his military service in the Navy from 1946 to 1948, Kaufman pursued interests in general and urologic surgery. Stationed in Guam, he performed herniorrhaphies and hemorrhoidectomies on Japanese prisoners of war and vasectomies on American Marines. He completed a 2-year general surgery residency at Newington Veterans Affairs hospital in Connecticut—a Yale affiliate—and published his first article “Leiomyoma of the prostate,” in the *Journal of Urology*.² After 1 year in a urology residency at Mt. Sinai in New York, he transferred to the Wadsworth Veterans Affairs in Los Angeles—a precursor to the current UCLA program.

At Wadsworth, Kaufman met and befriended Willard E. Goodwin, the Chief of urology at the soon-to-be-formed UCLA medical school. The two would operate together frequently—often on nights and weekends to accommodate the large number of veterans seeking urologic care—and work together in research. A comparison of prostate cancer diagnostic modalities (prostatic massage vs needle biopsy vs open perineal biopsy) won Kaufman the prestigious Joseph F. McCarthy Prize at the American Urological Association Western Section meeting in 1953.³

PRIVATE PRACTICE IN BEVERLY HILLS

After completing residency training in 1953, Kaufman was recruited to Goodwin’s faculty at UCLA but chose private practice instead, joining Murray Russell and Harold Kudish, 2 local urologists in Beverly Hills. Kaufman maintained appointments at 9 different hospitals.¹ A compelling and vibrant personality, marked surgical skill, and a stellar reputation among the Los Angeles elite made the newcomer a formidable force among local practices (personal interview with Jean B. deKernion, 2013).

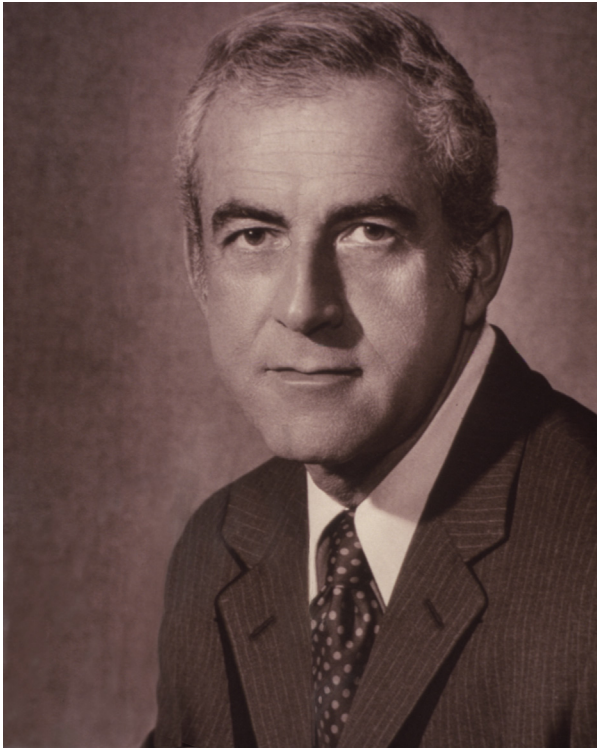
Kaufman continued his research interests with laboratory space in a small hut he maintained with Goodwin off-campus on Wilshire Boulevard. He would take 1 day a week to go to the Westwood research laboratory and collaborate with his former chief. At Yale, he had learned about heterotransplantation from celebrated pathologist, Harry Greene. In the small laboratory, Kaufman and Goodwin experimented with heterotransplantation of prostate cancer into the anterior chamber of rat eyes with the aim of culturing the tumor. Resultant pathology yielded only granulomas. In the other

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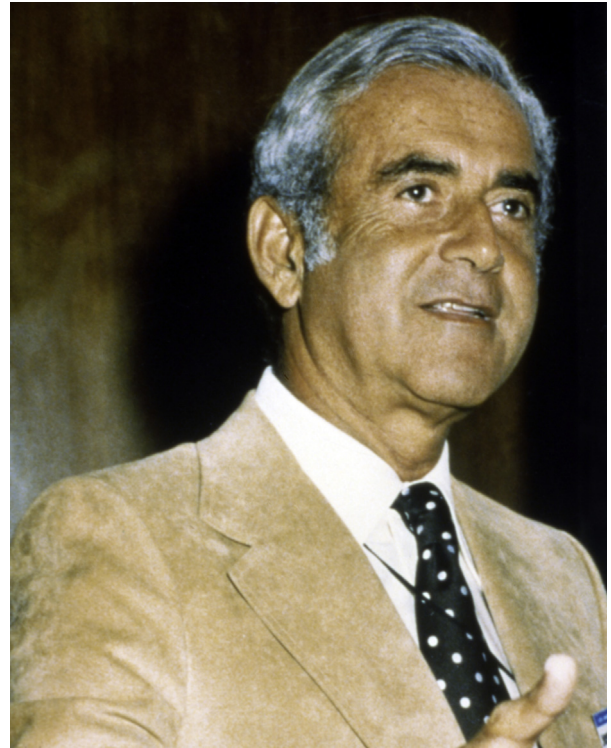
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Joseph J. Kaufman. (Color version available online.)



Joseph J. Kaufman, lecturing. (Color version available online.)

work, they used fluorescein to map the renal lymphatics. This work resulted in superficial corneal burns for Kaufman and Goodwin.¹ In 7 years of private practice, Kaufman published 30 articles on topics ranging from prostate cancer,⁴ abdominal venography,⁵ renal lymphatics,⁶ and uroflowmetry.⁷

RETURN TO ACADEMIA

In 1960, Chester Winter left the UCLA faculty to become Division Chief at the Ohio State University. Goodwin again recruited Kaufman to fill the vacancy, which was accepted this time without protest. The transition to academia came easily as Kaufman rapidly rose through the academic ranks achieving full-professorship within 6 years. Between 1960 and 1966, he presented at 68 scientific meetings, sat on 17 regional and national committees, and published 43 scientific papers including 3 in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and 5 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. His major academic pursuits during these years were uroradiology,⁸ kidney transplantation,⁹ and renovascular hypertension.¹⁰ While completing a Del Amo fellowship at the University of Madrid in 1962, Kaufman developed an interest in the field of renovascular hypertension, which he actively pursued. There, he successfully performed an autotransplantation on a 5-year-old boy with a solitary kidney and renovascular hypertension.¹ His scope of research and publication range broadened to include major reconstruction, incontinence, sexual medicine, and oncology. In 1971, Kaufman and Chief Resident Patrick C. Walsh wrote an article on retroperitoneal lymphadenectomy for testis tumors in a single afternoon (personal interview with Patrick C. Walsh, 2013) that was published in *JAMA* without edits.¹¹

Kaufman was described as a “maestro” in the operating room (personal interview with Richard M. Ehrlich, 2013). Elegant and dramatic, he was a master of anatomic exposure and was known for deliberate suture placement with accurate knot tying. Flanked by visiting urologists from the United States and abroad, Kaufman would theatrically describe the operation, pausing to quiz medical students on the origin of eponymous surgical instruments and anatomic landmarks (personal interview Floyd A. Katske, 2013). His mastery of surgery was reinforced by Patrick Walsh’s comment (personal interview with Patrick C. Walsh, 2013): “I would not have become the surgeon that I am without Joe.”

Jacob Rajfer Kaufman used bipolar forceps often but once, the aorta was inadvertently transected when a resident stepped on the cutting current during a renovascular case. Kaufman performed a jump graft with Dacron and continued the operation without admonishing the resident (personal interview with Jacob Rajfer, 2013). He was an innovator in renovascular surgical techniques (personal interview with Peter T. Scardino, 2013) and male incontinence prosthetics (personal interview with Shlomo Raz, 2013). Kaufman’s artistic approach to the field of surgery mirrored his mastery of scientific presentation. A skilled orator, his baritone voice commanded attention at 87 visiting professorships and invited lectures (personal interview with Richard J. Boxer, 2013).

In addition to his reputation as an innovative and expert surgeon, as well as a sought-after speaker, Kaufman proved a talented fundraiser for the division. In addition to 8 grants from the National Institutes of Health and 5 from the American Cancer Society, he received financial



Joseph J. Kaufman (left) and Willard E. Goodwin. (Color version available online.)

support from University of California Regent Frank Clark, Jr., Continental Airlines CEO Robert Six, and newspaperman Damon Runyon.¹ Goodwin's aspirations of expanding the Division to one of national acclaim, as well as a strong desire to keep Kaufman from leaving, propelled Kaufman to Division Chief in 1970 (personal interview with Patrick C. Walsh, 2013). Known as an aggressive promoter of his faculty and international advocate for urology, he recruited promising young academicians: Robert Smith, Don Skinner, Richard Ehrlich, Jean deKernion, Shlomo Raz, and Martin Coyle, among others (personal interview with Jean B. deKernion, 2013). He nurtured local talent and fostered camaraderie within the Division, demanding that everyone was on a first-name basis (personal interview with Robert B. Smith, 2013). The Division grew dramatically during the 1970s as Kaufman filled in every emerging subspecialty in urology: oncology, pediatrics, female and neurourology, andrology, reconstruction, and transplantation.

Concurrently, extracorporeal shock wave lithotripsy (ESWL) emerged as a minimally invasive approach to stone disease and was at that time, a coveted resource. Attesting to his perspicacity, Kaufman went to Germany and recruited the ESWL inventor (personal interview with Leonard S. Marks, 2013). Christian Chaussy came to UCLA in 1982 from Munich at the height of his ascent in German and international urology. The ESWL machine was running "day and night" for many years and established UCLA as a primary stone-referral center. Another hallmark of his tenure as Chief was the flourishing international fellows program. In all, 40 countries on 6 continents were represented, including Fritz Schroeder from Germany.

RENAISSANCE MAN

Kaufman's endeavors beyond surgical and research pursuits engendered the sobriquet of Renaissance man. His artistic interests included classical music, piano, photography and film, and beautiful penmanship for which he was well known. Kaufman listened to Beethoven during most of his vascular operations and would distribute his own piano recordings as Christmas presents. Wintertime parties at the Snowmass, Colorado home of Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara—Goodwin's college roommate and friend—often featured Kaufman performing at the piano (personal interview with William L. Parry, 2013). A video of Kaufman playing the piano for Walsh, a former resident who returned to UCLA as visiting professor from Johns Hopkins in 1984, epitomizes the passing of a torch between urologic generations. He was a competitive tennis player, avid ocean swimmer, and daring skier—breaking his humerus during a 1975 trip to Snowmass.

Kaufman's interest in motion pictures blended his artistic and surgical interests in perhaps his best-known work, *The Art of the Retropubic Prostatectomy*. A joint venture with Walsh as a second-year resident, this parody film was the highlight of the 1969 annual meeting of the American Urological Association in San Francisco. It became the most popular video in urology of the era. In all, he produced 37 motion pictures on surgical technique, renovascular hypertension, and urologic education.

Kaufman's Rolodex read like a who's-who in Hollywood, business, and academic urology. Groucho Marx, a patient and close friend, performed at the Clinical Society of the Genitourinary Surgeons in 1976 at Kaufman's request (personal interview with Richard M. Ehrlich, 2013). Composer Hoagy Carmichael, Occidental

Petroleum CEOs Armand Hammer and Ray Irani, Drew Pearson, Walter Winchell, and developer and Yankees owner Del Webb were in his close circle of friends. Frank Clark, Chairman of the University of California Board of Regents, was his patient and confidant. In the urologic community, he was particularly close with Lester Persky, Victor Politano, Wyland Leadbetter, J. Hartwell Harrison, Vince O'Connor Jr, Tate Mason, and Ian Thompson, Sr (personal interviews with Richard M. Ehrlich, Robert B. Smith, and Jerome P. Richie, 2013).

RETIREMENT AND MAUI

As Kaufman's academic star continued to rise, several events occurred within the Division that would frame his legacy and set the stage for urology in Southern California. In 1978, Jean deKernion was recruited from UCLA to Tulane, and in 1980, Don Skinner was recruited to the University of Southern California.¹²

In 1983, Kaufman had a cerebrovascular accident at the height of his academic career. He had atrial fibrillation but avoided warfarin after bruising sustained when playing tennis. Fortunately, Kaufman and the UCLA Cancer Center had recruited deKernion back in 1980 as Head of urologic oncology, and deKernion assumed the position of acting Chief and then permanent Chief, after a national search.¹²

The stroke was complicated by an expressive aphasia that greatly impaired his speech and robbed him of his surgical prowess, significantly altering the course of his life. His later life was plagued by a series of small strokes. He withdrew from clinical and administrative duties and spent increasing amounts of his time at a beachfront property in Maui (personal interviews with Floyd A. Katske and William L. Parry, 2013). He continued to enjoy tennis and ocean swimming but lamented his separation from the university life to which he had become so accustomed (personal interview with Floyd A. Katske, 2013).

His career was marked by election to the American Association of Genitourinary Surgeons and the Clinical Society of Genitourinary Surgeons, and he received the coveted Guiteras Award and Barringer Medal, both in 1986. He developed surgical procedures for renovascular hypertension, incontinence, and impotence and had trained urologic chairmen and noted faculty at major universities around the world. Despite these accomplishments, his primary fear was being "forgotten" (personal interview with Patrick C. Walsh, 2013). He died in the Pacific Ocean in 1999 while swimming off the coast of Maui.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT



It was my good fortune to get to know Joe through the American Urological Association Update and American Board of Urology (ABU) boards when we served together. Joe tanned, immaculately dressed, with steel gray hair commanded a presence in any setting. Once during dinner at the Greenbriar, John Donohue ordered a Mondavi Cabernet. The waiter apologized, "we do not carry that wine." Without a change in expression, John nodded at Joe and responded, "Mr. Mondavi will be very disappointed." Joe did not miss a beat and looked appropriately offended until the sommelier arrived and informed "Mr. Mondavi" that the next time he was a guest, they would have his wine available. Joe was an accomplished pianist and often played after board meeting dinners, alternating between popular tunes, classical pieces, and the mandatory college-fight songs especially for Michigan and Virginia led by Ralph Straffon and Hartwell Harrison. One of his favorite pieces was "Memories" from the play *Cats*. I had a friend in New York, Marty Richards, who knew Andrew Lloyd Weber. When Joe left the ABU Board, I was able to give him a copy of the original sheet music of "Memories" from *Cats* signed to Joe from Andrew Lloyd Weber. I was surprised to find out that Joe had never seen *Cats*. So when he received the Valentine Award from the New York Academy of Medicine, Anne and I took him to the play which he thoroughly enjoyed. His Valentine speech at the academy was memorable; I am sorry, we did not record it. He implored the audience to enjoy fully all aspects of life, travel, the arts, family, friends, hobbies not just our academic career. I thought he was a role model for the advice, but he had regrets for things left undone. We were out on the cape for an ABU Board meeting. Sitting on the beach, Joe told us that he had just had a successful cardioversion. He added that he had refused anticoagulation for fear that it would limit his activities. After the meeting, he returned to Los Angeles, and unfortunately, had his cerebrovascular accident Sad.

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