

Sara Segal Loevy
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Thank you for creating this opportunity for me to share some thoughts with you today, centered around the The Prayer for our Country.

My decision to speak about the Prayer for our Country comes from three related sources. The first is a very personal need at this moment in my life to speak about memory. The second source is another personal need, also related to memory. Just two days ago, I observed the tenth yahrzeit of my beloved stepfather, Fremont Mordechai Kaufman, so he is very much on my mind. The third source arises from the secular: in our country's calendar we have just observed the President's Day holiday, honoring all of the men who have served as president, and yesterday, we celebrated George Washington's birthday.

Let me begin with the immediate, the most personal, that is, the importance of memory and how we mark memory. As some of you know, my mother at age 96 is fading away both physically and mentally. The mother I knew - bright, vibrant, and tireless, the family matriarch, the energetic volunteer – has disappeared. Aging has eaten away at her memory and I am restructuring my relationship with her because our life together is bounded by both her physical and mental infirmities. There are no new activities that propel the relationship forward into new places. Instead, the two of us live in her past as she asks after the wellbeing of cousins, aunts, uncles, friends who are long gone. She worries about who is caring for the babies – her three grandsons – men in their 30's and 40's, and is both amazed and puzzled when I remind her that they are married, have jobs, drive cars, have babies of their own. In this restructured relationship, my mother and I build a new life together in which memory serves as the girders.

It struck me a few weeks back as I was in the midst of the Shemona Esrai, puzzling as always over the words “mechayai hamatim” “giving life to the dead” that memory is one of the ways we give life to the dead. Memory is what keeps those who have died alive in our souls, in our being. Memory sustains my mother and is the stuff of my relationship with her.

My mother was blessed with two wonderful husbands, neither of whom she speaks of. She was married to my father, Carl Segal, for 25 years and then widowed at the age of 46. Six years later, after a long and hard period of mourning, she met and married my stepfather, Fremont Mordechai Kaufman, a lawyer from LaSalle, Illinois. Because Fremont no longer exists in my mother's memory, and because he synthesized his Judaism and his citizenship so completely, and because he was such an influence for good in our family and in his community, I speak of him today. I hope to give life to him through memory, on the 10th anniversary of his death, bound forever to the holiday of Purim in which we were rescued from the tyranny of a prime minister and before which we recall Amalek and this year, following the week during which we recall the elected leaders – the presidents - of this country.

As a bit of background. Fremont was born in November of 1908 in Compton Illinois which is in La Salle County, halfway across the state on either side of what is now Interstate 80. The week Fremont was born, the Midwestern winter had already set in. The ruts in the rural roads were frozen, so Fremont's father, Joseph Kaufman, had a precarious trip driving his horse and wagon to the train station to pick up the mohel from Chicago and bring him back to the Kaufman household for the bris of what would be the oldest of four sons. Living as a Jew in LaSalle County was a very different life from that of urban Jewish immigrants.

Fremont's great grandfather, Ephraim Kaufman, after whom Fremont was named, came to Illinois from Russia in 1884 and worked as a peddler. Fremont's grandfather, Louis, followed Ephraim about five years later in 1889. Louis brought with him his young son, Joseph Kaufman. By the turn of the century, the Kaufman family was established in LaSalle County. Louis Kaufman bought and sold wool. Joe Kaufman owned a general store but, following in the path of his father, also bought and sold livestock and hides, bringing them to market in Chicago with, in later years, the assistance of his four sons. When it came time for Joe's oldest son, Fremont, to go to college in the mid 1920s, he asked the local banker where he should send his son to school. The banker replied that the best choice for a smart young boy like Fremont would be the University of Chicago. So Fremont came to Hyde Park and after two years in the college, entered the University of Chicago law school, graduating around 1930.

Fremont practiced law in Compton, was drafted as a private in his mid-30s towards the end of WWII, survived landing at Oklahoma Beach on D-Day, and returned to practice law and raise his family in LaSalle County where he was born.

I think of him always during the Prayer for Our Country, written by the scholar Louis Ginzberg and appearing in the first Conservative Festival Prayer Book, published in 1927, about when Fremont entered law school. Fremont was a kind man, a gentle man, a highly principled man. His dedication to law and to justice never waivered. He worked as a country lawyer to safeguard the ideals and free institutions that are the pride and glory of our country.

Fremont had a great nephew, Joseph Kaufman, named after Fremont's father and like Fremont, a graduate of the University of Chicago Law School. At the Shabbat dinner preceding the marriage of Fremont's great-nephew Joseph Kaufman in 1994, Fremont told the following story to the wedding guests.

"Mrs. Kaufman and I gave a rather unique gift to Joseph on his graduation from the University of Chicago Law School. It was a framed enlargement of the opinion of the Second District Appellate Court of the State of Illinois in the litigation entitled Frank Breuer vs. Louis Kaufman. The case is dated March 13, 1907. The opinion was unanimous.

Breuer vs. Kaufman was not a tremendous case. It only involved \$84.68. The case undoubtedly has long since been forgotten in legal circles. The case is being recalled tonight because it is a permanent record of some of the early business years of Grandfather Louis Kaufman. From the case, we learn that from 1892, if not for some time prior to that year, Louis Kaufman was engaged in the business of buying wool from farmers in northeastern La Salle County, Illinois. On December 29, 1904, Grandfather Kaufman purchased the wool from Breuer's 120 sheep. Delivery was to be made in the summer of 1905 after the sheep had been shorn. When it came time for Breuer to deliver the wool, he could not do so. He had sold the wool to a third party for a higher price. Grandfather sued for his loss. After winning two jury trials in the lower courts, on final appeal by Breuer to the Appellate Court, Grandfather prevailed.

Although Breuer vs. Kaufman is nearly 100 years old, it has importance to me as a descendant of a Jewish immigrant. My grandparents were ruthlessly confined to the poorest and most isolated area of Russia. They were without rights or privileges. Their cries remained unanswered. They could not bear witness against a Gentile no matter how serious the injury might be. They lived in fear. Their lives and safety hung by a thread. The civil courts were not available to them. The grandparents of many of those who are gathered here tonight undoubtedly lived under similar circumstances.

But consider the transformation Breuer vs. Kaufman showed in the life of my Grandfather Kaufman. Here he was able to travel at will unmolested by anyone in an unlimited area and free to carry on his trade. He could travel the country side without fear for his personal safety. He had the right and power to labor to make a living for his family. Grandfather, in common with all other residents, could seek redress in the state's civil courts. And so he could bring suit to enforce his contract with Breuer: something he could not do in Russia. Breuer vs. Kaufman is also a tribute to the juries and judges who considered the case. They accepted the version of the transaction offered by an itinerant Jewish wool buyer over that of their fellow resident Gentile farmer. Life undoubtedly remained hard but the spirit of my Grandfather must have soared to tremendous heights. He was a free man in the United States.

All of us gathered here tonight to honor Janet and Joseph enjoy our good lives because cruelty and despair drove our ancestors to these shores. It is, therefore, mandatory and proper that we always remember from whence we came and the tragedies that have been inflicted on our Jewish people throughout our history.”

This is one of the stories that I remember about Fremont and the Kaufman family when we recite the Prayer for Our Country. Jonathan Sarna, the contemporary academic commentator on Jewish life in America, reminds us that the Prayer for Our Country was the first prayer in the Jewish service written for a democracy. He marvels at its perfect synthesis of Jewish and American values.

From my perspective, the story of Breuer vs. Kaufman reminds us that we are capable of administering all affairs of state fairly and of banishing hatred and bigotry, and that like Louis

Kaufman, we must all be able to travel at will unmolested by anyone in an unlimited area and be free to carry on our trade. We must all be able to travel the country side without fear for our personal safety. We must all be able to seek redress in the state's civil courts. Shabbat Shalom.