

■ **BOOK LAUNCH:** Cobourg debut Oct. 2

Author winds up immigration saga in new anthology

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Northumberland Today

COBOURG — The saga of immigration which Cobourg author Shane Joseph has explored through several books winds up with his new short-story anthology *Paradise Revisited*, which will be launched in Cobourg Oct. 2.

Also launched by Blue Denim press at the 7 p.m. event at Meet at 66 King East will be local author Ursula Pflug's *The Alphabet Stones* and Toronto author Ann Elizabeth Carson's *We All Become Stories*.

Paradise Revisited was somewhat inspired by his last book, *The Ulysses Man*, which had echoes of the Ulysses myth in its somewhat autobiographical story of a man who emigrated to Canada from Sri Lanka but felt to some degree like a displaced person.

While *The Ulysses Man* deals centres around the story of Martin James, Joseph found many of the other characters intriguing. One of the short stories in *Paradise Revisited* develops one of these characters more fully.

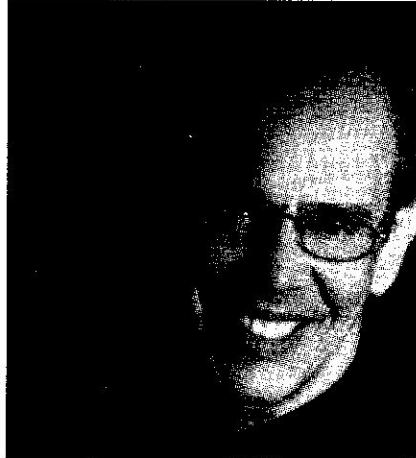
The other stories (some in first-person and some in third-person, some relatively brief and some approaching the status of a novella) tell the stories of other Sri Lankan immigrants at various stages of the experience that Joseph went through — but all from the male viewpoint, he added, since that is the one he knows.

"They covered people from the very young, who haven't yet left but are educating to leave, to those who have arrived on the other side and are looking back, perhaps, to some unfinished business," the author said in a recent interview.

"The final story is about a guy who left, did extremely well in North America and went back to make a contribution to the war effort. It turns out to be a surprise — sometimes contributions are not welcome. Sometimes the home country is different from what you thought it was when you go altruistically and try to help," he said.

"The characters go from being somewhat youthful and rebellious to philosophical and mature at the end."

The title has many levels of meaning, Joseph said. It does not refer to John Milton so much as it does to the fact that Marco Polo called Sri Lanka Paradise. Indeed, Joseph's first book



Submitted Photo

Shane Joseph's new book, *Paradise Revisited*, completes the saga of immigration he has explored in several books. It will get a Toronto launch Sept. 29 and a Cobourg launch Oct. 2.

was called *Redemption In Paradise*.

"It was set in the civil war, when Paradise had become Hell," he said.

"One of the stories (in the new book) is actually called *Paradise Revisited*. It's set in a tea plantation that was named Paradise, but has become run down. The letters "dise" had fallen off the sign, so it said Para — which means rotten in Sri Lanka. It's just a way of saying something is rotten in the state of Denmark," Joseph said, making a Shakespearean reference.

Having so thoroughly explored the immigrant's story, Joseph believes a turning point has been reached.

"I have personally made the transition, and I think I can now focus on writing about Canadian themes," he said.

Paradise Revisited and the other two Blue Denim books will also have a Sept. 29 launch at 3 p.m. at The Rivoli in Toronto.

Blue Denim was started up in Cobourg three years ago by Joseph's wife Sarah Jacob to showcase local authors. They like to cater to special niches, like Cobourg audiences, but they also have a good base in Toronto.

These books are available both in paper and electronic versions, Joseph said, so you can find them on both Amazon and in Chapters.

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