

A life of politics and peace

We meet at Oceana Natural Foods Co-op. Maria Sause will turn 77 December 9. Her face reflects five or six iterations of her life's journey.

Just four days 80 years ago could have changed this interview – she might not have been conceived and born. Maria's father Franta (Francisco) left Czechoslovakia a scant 96 hours after Nazi Germany took over her parents' homeland.

The Czech family line, originally Kraus, goes way back: "I just got in touch with a second cousin two years ago who has completed the family tree. The Kraus family goes back to the late 1700s in Czechoslovakia."

I'm with Maria on a warm Sunday, ready to feature her life — amazing intellectual and creative journeys she's taken having been born in Chile in 1942 and her own family's powerful narrative of survival.

I am also scrambling to get some ink down concerning the Lincoln County Community Rights' "loss" in state court after being successful with a countywide aerial

herbicide ban on forestland, AKA, clear-cuts. The short-lived ban was the first in the country won by popular vote.

On September 23, Judge Sheryl Bachart issued her ruling that Measure 21-177 is invalid based on state law regulating pesticide use. That measure (for the ban) was voted on by citizens in 2017, okaying the prohibition of aerial spraying of all pesticides.

"The fight for our legal, constitutional and fundamental right of local self-government marches on," said Rio Davidson, president of Lincoln County Community Rights, "and it is going to take the political will of the people to make it a reality if we ever want to stop living under the thumb of corporate government."

LCCR is now in overdrive, setting up town hall meetings to strategize to fight the judge's reversal. For people like Maria, this is a huge blow to her community and to her concept of democracy.

"Pre-emption laws are made whenever government and industry see the people are rising up against their projects," she said. "A government that protects industry at a higher



By Maria Sause

Have your say

Do you have thoughts on the aerial spray ban? Join Lincoln County Community Rights for a town hall meeting, 2-4 pm, Sunday, Oct. 20 at the Lincoln City Cultural Center, 540 NE Hwy. 101.

level than it protects the safety of the people is unconstitutional."

This concept of having a fundamental right enshrined by the Constitution that allows people to decide locally on issue of health, safety and the environment, is held dearly by Sause.

She has witnessed the devastation caused by total forest removal in her own neck of the woods where she lives in small above-garage apartment on acreage along Fruitvale Road. The stumps are emblematic of her own fight and LCCR's fight against clearcutting.

With the ban reversed, who knows when the timber company will begin spraying glyphosate, Atrazine and 2,4-D (an ingredient in Agent Orange made infamous in Vietnam) near where she lives.

"Right where I live, they clear cut an enormous parcel of the forest." Interestingly, her life-long avocation of painting now reflects thick forest, sky and clear-cut landscape.

Holocaust, History, Chile

Maria is an avowed anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist. Her early days in Santiago, Chile, with her industrialist father (he was a licensed

medical doctor from Czechoslovakia whose credentials were not recognized in Chile) was one of struggle since he was a highly intelligent but dictatorial man.

Her father was prescient enough to have sent his wife, Lisbet Erica Hirsch (maiden name), to England in 1938 before things got ugly in Europe.

Maria and I talk about history, about the saga of her Jewish heritage and roots. Her Kraus family line was virtually extinguished — 54 members on her father's side (and an unknown number on her mother's side) were exterminated in places like Auschwitz. Nazis processed professional Jews through the town of Theresienstadt, a hybrid concentration camp and ghetto established by the SS during World War II.

"My father in his youth belonged to several left movements. Maybe it was the shock and trauma of losing parents and the entire family that turned him into a rightwing conservative."

Maria and her sister were sent to private schools outside of Santiago in the 1940s and 50s. Her parents split when she was one and a half years old and the legal battle for the children put them into a children's

home. After Maria turned six, her father took the girls to live with him, and eventually remarried when Maria was 12.

Ironically, the New World formerly conquered by Spain — much of South America, including Chile — is where the Kraus Family ended up. During so-called Biblical times world Jewry's most concentrated homeland was located in what is now Spain. Maria says her paternal grandmother comes from the Sephardic Jewish population, which according to history books had established themselves in Spain almost 1,700 years ago.

Her own diaspora as a secular, non-practicing Jew is what she herself precipitated once she hit age 19 and her father approved of Maria coming to the US to study at the San Francisco State College. She stayed with an aunt and uncle there. That residence lasted six months before Maria was out on her own, working, going to school and eventually marrying.

Summer of Love

Maria talks about her vibrant circle of friends and compatriots now in Lincoln County. At 76, she has good friends in Lincoln County, and the Lincoln County Community Rights organization is also a lifeforce for her. She has three grandchildren from a single offspring, Christopher, who has spent time in Portland, Tempe, San Francisco and Chile.

Maria has gone to school to learn English literature as an avocation to becoming a public-school teacher, which she tried her hand at as a single mother raising Christopher, who graduated from Newport High a long time ago.

That lesson, after having gained a master's in education in a one-year intensive program at Portland's Reed College, was a tough.

She says working as an English-Art-Journalism teacher at Siletz High School was a hard lesson. "The kids just ate me up, I wasn't prepared for all the behavioral issues. I gave the principal my resignation after two years."

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Paul Haeder is a writer living and working in Lincoln County. He has two books coming out, one a short story collection, "Wide Open Eyes: Surfacing from Vietnam," and a non-fiction book, "No More Messing Around: The Good, Bad and Ugly of America's Education System."

