



Times-Standard

Economist and conservative Kasun dies

John Driscoll/The Times-Standard

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Jacqueline Rorabeck Kasun, an economist whose work helped guide Arcata to build its renowned marsh and wastewater treatment facility, died on the first day of 2009.

Kasun, who became professor emeritus of economics at Humboldt State University, has a remarkable history that reaches across the globe. But she also played important roles locally, both in the wastewater wars of the 1970s and in her participation in conservative and pro-life efforts in Humboldt County.

Orphaned only months after her birth in 1924, she was raised by her grandparents in Watts. She graduated from the University of California at Berkeley, then enlisted in the U.S. Army, and went on to earn a master's and later a doctorate at Columbia University.

She wrote the book, "The War Against Population," that argued against the idea that human populations are growing far too fast. She later founded Humboldt Pro-Life, an educational resource dissuading women from having abortions.

Just after federal Clean Water Act amendments passed in 1972, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board insisted that Humboldt come up with a regional wastewater treatment system. Along with environmental worries

over developing the huge system, the costs were enormous.

Kasun was among those crunching the numbers on costs. The regional plant would consume an incredible amount of power and cost Arcata alone more than twice what upgrading its system at the time would cost, Kasun found. She and Dan Ihara, at the time with the Manila Community Services District, sued and put on a petition drive to ensure voters had final say on any bonds. Biologists and engineers were able to develop the system that would later become the marsh.

"The alternative was the marsh," said former Arcata City Manager Dan Hauser, "which ended up being replicated around the world."

Hauser described Kasun as wise counsel, and that her work was what allowed the city to pursue another option to treat its wastewater.

Kasun is survived by her husband, Ret. U.S. Army Lt. Col. Joseph Frank Kasun, and their three children, Christine Kasun Moruza, Audrey Kasun Moruza and son Ret. U.S. Navy Lt. Cdr. Walter Kasun, 10 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Friend and fellow conservative, attorney Bill Bertain, said that Kasun had advised the pope on population issues, despite the fact that she was an Episcopalian. He described her as charming and gracious, and someone who could keep people on the edge of their seats with her stories.

"She was world class," Bertain said.

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