In sadness, the International Society for Universal Dialogue (ISUD) remembers the passing of John Rensenbrink. John passed away peacefully on July 30th, 2022. He was 93. John was one of ISUD’s founding members and served as President of ISUD from 2005–2007.

His many contributions to ISUD included writing the first draft of its constitution. His clear and precise articulation of ISUD’s core values continue to guide the Society.

John’s accomplishments include a PhD in political science from the University of Chicago, governmental service for the U.S. Agency for International Development, and research on the early days of the Solidarity movement in Poland. While in Poland, John became acquainted with the rising success of European Green Parties and subsequently became Co-Founder of both the Green Party in the state of Maine (the first of its kind in the United States) and the U.S. Green Party. In 1996 he ran for the U.S. Senate on the Green Party ticket.

John served as international roving ambassador for the Green movement, helping to forge links between Green Parties in North and South America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. John worked tirelessly to promote international and intercultural dialogue on all things political until his death. His efforts were guided by his life-long belief that politics, i.e., shared deliberation and dialogue for the common good, was a noble and uplifting activity.

John continues to be an inspiring model for his belief that theory and practice are inseparable; that the role of a “public intellectual” demands action and not simply theory. He was a local, national, and global activist for many organizations that promoted a more peaceful and humane world, environmental justice, and equal justice for women and minorities.

In his 2017 book, Ecological Politics: For Survival and Democracy, he charts a path for the overcoming of the “tragedy” of contemporary (and degraded) forms of politics to a transformational and elevating form of politics rooted in an ecological vision. John argues that much needed values of peace, justice, and environmental integrity are both idealistic and realistic.
Over the years that I was fortunate enough to know and work with John, it became clear that a great number of people from many different “walks of life” have been inspired by John and held him in high respect for all the right reasons. The world is a better place because of John Rensenbrink. He will be missed.

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MEMORIES OF MY FRIEND JOHN RENSENBRINK,
HIS PASSION AND PRAXIS
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John Rensenbrink’s long life was an adventure, an exploration, a mission of leadership and service to humanity—and the Earth. Guided by passion for knowledge, for understanding, for wisdom, shaped by deeply humanist morality, my dear friend John lived in, and helped create, a world of thought and action, an ecological praxis of resistance, exuberance, and love.

John and I first met in the midst of the political and economic crises of the 1970s. At home in the U.S., mass movements were defending Black, Indigenous, Latino, and Asian peoples, advocating women’s equality, and opposing U.S. wars abroad. Internationally, decolonization was underway, a powerful anti-apartheid movement threatened white nationalist regimes in southern Africa, and insurgencies and counter-insurgencies (funded by the U.S.) kept Latin America in turmoil. Salvador Allende had been overthrown and assassinated in Chile, at U.S. direction, just two years before. Domestically, both major political parties were enmeshed in the Cold War, and the left had largely been purged from both the Democratic Party and the labor movement. In the post-Watergate era, the Republican Party was well down a reactionary path toward Ronald Reagan’s coming assault on the postwar consensus. A growing environmental movement was battling both industrial pollution and nuclear power. Economically, American communities were struggling to recover from the 1973 oil crisis, from wholesale deindustrialization, and from corporate attacks on hard-won labor agreements.

Against this backdrop, John and I first crossed paths at a national meeting of radical scholars convened at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, USA. In his keynote lecture to a hundred peers including such irrepressible