

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

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September 6, 2005

To the American Bahá'í Community

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

We received with heavy hearts news of the passing from this earthly life of beloved and respected retired Universal House of Justice member, Dr. David S. Ruhe. To us, he was much more than an erudite Bahá'í scholar and a veteran and expert administrator of the Faith's affairs; he was an esteemed advisor, a cherished colleague, and a dear friend. We join the entire Bahá'í world in mourning his loss and in celebrating his stellar achievements in the service of God and of humanity.

Physician, educator, writer, and painter, Dr. Ruhe was all these, and as such, was one who could accurately and deservedly be described as a "Renaissance man." A graduate of Temple University's School of Medicine, his career as a physician and medical educator charted a distinguished course from posts as Senior Surgeon with the U.S. Public Health Service and Director of the Medical Film Institute for the Association of American Medical Colleges, to Chairman of the Department of Medical Communication at Kansas University's School of Medicine. His creativity and aesthetic sense were exercised not only in his direction of numerous award-winning educational films, but in his love for painting natural scenes – expressed in his accomplished watercolors, which reflected his training in the Lehigh Valley school of impressionism.

Notwithstanding his many and varied professional and personal interests, the focal point of Dr. Ruhe's life was always the Bahá'í Faith, and his efforts on behalf of its divine Originator followed a similar trajectory of steadily increasing responsibility and progressively more distinguished service. The years succeeding his enrollment as a Bahá'í in 1941 saw him serving on a host of national committees, including two different Regional Teaching Committees and committees focusing on Bahá'í activities at the United Nations, at the Green Acre Bahá'í School, and at the Bahá'í House of Worship – to mention but a few. A homefront pioneer to the city of Atlanta, a former stronghold of the vanquished Confederacy, he fearlessly championed the oneness of humanity – as he did throughout his life – even in the face of threats to his safety. First elected to the National Spiritual Assembly in 1959, by 1963 he had become its Secretary, effectively bringing

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to a close his professional career and setting in motion a three-decades-long period during which his life would be entirely dedicated to service on the Faith's senior institutions – first, for five years, at its national headquarters in the United States; then, following his election in 1968 to the Universal House of Justice, for 25 years, at its World Center.

Though his absorption in the stewardship of the Faith's affairs afforded him little time for leisure, Dr. Ruhe's creative impulses remained strong and found new expression in his writing, which ultimately led him to publish two popular books concerned with Bahá'í history: *Door of Hope*, published in 1983, which presents a detailed explanation of the history and significance of the Faith's sacred sites in the Holy Land, and *Robe of Light*, published in 1994, which focuses on the early years of Bahá'u'lláh's life, prior to His exile from Persia in 1853. Retiring from the Universal House of Justice in 1993 after five five-year terms as a member, Dr. Ruhe returned to the United States, settling in upstate New York. Though advanced in years, he remained vibrant and active, producing a series of documentary television programs about the Faith and attending various Bahá'í conferences, at which his always stimulating presentations were received warmly and with rapt attention.

Throughout his exemplary career – forever to remain a bright star in the firmament of Bahá'í history – Dr. Ruhe's beloved wife, Margaret, was his strong anchor, his most trusted advisor and confidante. She and their cherished sons, Christopher and Douglas, together with their wives and children, were, without doubt, the light of his life. We extend our heartfelt condolences to them and to all his many loved ones and friends, assuring them of our prayers, offered in the serene stillness of the sacred and luminous Bahá'í House of Worship, that his precious soul may continue its eternal journey through "*worlds, holy and spiritually glorious*" that are even now being unveiled before his astonished eyes. May "*days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight*" truly be his, lovingly bestowed by the grateful King of Glory Whom he served so consummately, for so long, and with such complete devotion.

In loving remembrance,

Robert C. Henderson
Secretary-General