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Arthur Firstenberg: May 28, 1950 – February 25, 2025

Arthur Firstenberg, author, environmentalist and activist, died in his home after months of an undiagnosed illness, surrounded by family and friends.

Arthur was born in Brooklyn, New York to survivors of the Holocaust. His childhood summers in upstate New York, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite National Park, and on an island near Newfoundland fostered his love of nature. At Cornell University, he devoted half of his time to hiking, canoeing and rock climbing—and half to physics, mathematics, ancient civilizations and foreign languages. After graduating in 1971, he lived with small farmers in Norway and among Guatemala’s traditional Maya.

From 1978 to 1982, Arthur attended medical school at the University of California, Irvine. He left before graduating after more than 40 dental x-rays led to his experiencing microwave sickness.

He became a vegetarian and a Feldenkrais practitioner.

In 1986, Arthur participated in the Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament. While walking across the U.S., he witnessed modern society’s destruction of the Earth and its creatures. In 1989, in search of a simple life, he traveled to northernmost Canada but found heart-wrenching destruction there, too.

In 1996, to expedite the roll-out of cellular phone service, Congress passed the Telecommunications Act. Its Section 704 prohibits municipalities from denying permits to install cellular antennas based on their environmental effects. Arthur founded the [Cellular Phone Task Force](#) and began providing a clearinghouse for information about wireless technologies’ injurious effects and a global support network for people disabled by electromagnetic fields. He began tracking the permit requests that corporations made to municipalities to install cellular antennas, smart meters and other radiation-emitting technologies—and rallied others to try to stop such efforts.

In 1997, based on the rights of states, nature and disabled people, the Cellular Phone Task Force joined other groups to challenge the Federal Communications Commission’s radio-frequency radiation exposure limits. Their efforts were unsuccessful.

In 2002, the U.S. Access Board recognized that under the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), electromagnetic sensitivities may be considered disabilities.

Arthur moved to Santa Fe, NM in 2005. Introducing himself to a packed audience at the Women’s Club, he named some of the effects of exposure to electromagnetic radiation—nausea, nosebleeds, diarrhea, headaches, insomnia, fatigue, irregular hair loss and nerve pain. Many people were moved to tears as they realized wireless technologies’ effects on their families, pets and themselves.

Each time a corporation proposed a new cell tower or the city proposed installing new WiFi, or a utility proposed transmitting “smart” meters, Arthur notified his mailing list and encouraged people to attend public hearings and speak out. The City Council chambers often overflowed.

Arthur became known for his intolerance of wireless devices, his passionate public comments, his unwillingness to compromise on ecological or public health, and for suing a neighbor whose Wi-Fi disturbed him. The *NY Times* and other media repeatedly ridiculed Arthur for that lawsuit. The attention did not faze him.

In 2021, through the Santa Fe Alliance for Public Health and Safety, he petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to rule on 1) whether the Telecom Act’s Section 704 violates the First Amendment right of access to courts and 2) whether “environmental effects” also encompasses “health effects.” Many organizations joined this suit, but the Supreme Court refused to hear the case.

Arthur tracked the dates of his experience of new or intensified symptoms—and found that they correlated with the dates on which satellites, 5G and other technologies turned on. In *The Invisible Rainbow*, he correlated electrification’s rise with the increase of previously unknown diseases including cancer, heart disease, diabetes and Alzheimer’s. He considered radiation emitted by cordless phones, cellular antennas, mobile phones, laptops, fluorescent lights, satellites, smart utility meters, newer cars and other transmitting devices a violation of nature.

For years, Arthur got around Santa Fe with a bicycle. He never owned a television or a cell phone. He dreamed of people politely accepting neighbors’ requests to turn off mobile devices and unplug WiFi. Because computers ravage the Earth and public health from their cradles-to-graves, he dreamed of a society with shared—not individually owned—computers. He frequently called for people to quit using mobile devices.

As a member of Once A Forest, he opposed forest management policies such as thinning and prescribed fires.

Arthur understood the consequences of the electrical power at our fingertips.

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“The only thing we can really do for the Earth is to stop destroying it. Then the Earth will take care of itself. Instead of trying to fix the whole planet, let us attend to our own simple lives.”  
Arthur Firstenberg

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Firstenberg’s books include *The Invisible Rainbow: A History of Electricity and Life* (Chelsea Green, 2020, more than 100,000 copies sold); *Microwaving Our Planet: The Environmental Impact of the Wireless Revolution* (1997); and, most recently, [The Earth and I](#) (Skyhorse, 2025).

Arthur Firstenberg is survived by a nephew and countless people committed to respecting nature and reducing electronic technologies’ harms to ecosystems and public health.

A memorial gathering was held Saturday, March 1st at the Santa Fe Main Library.

A Zoom memorial will be scheduled at a later date.

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There is an invitation to post reflections and memories of Arthur on a dedicated page at Safe Tech International’s Website

Comments and reflections can take the form of prose, poetry, music, art, video, or ideas and announcements of ways to further Arthur’s work. Please send “submissions” to [team@safetechinternational.org](mailto:team@safetechinternational.org), and they will post them to the page. Indicate in your email whether you would (or would not) like your name and country displayed with the comment.