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The Japan Times **NEWS**

Man of the people: Self-declared first 'world citizen' Garry Davis (right) appears in a criminal court in Paris on Oct. 4, 1949. Also in the courtroom was Pierre Berge, a member of the Citizens of the World movement who later became a co-founder of the Yves Saint Laurent fashion house. | AFP-JIJI

WORLD

**First 'world citizen' Garry Davis dies**

AFP-JIJI

[ARTICLE HISTORY](#) JUL 30, 2013

**WASHINGTON** – Peace activist Garry Davis, who dramatically renounced his U.S. citizenship in the dark days of the Cold War and founded a government for self-declared "world citizens" like himself, has died.

Davis passed away in a hospice in Vermont, where he had lived for many years, last Wednesday, the executive branch of the World Government of World Citizens said Monday.

He would have been 92 last Saturday. The cause of death was not known, but he had been suffering from cancer in recent years.

"Garry Davis was an astonishing human being," said David Gallup, the current president of the World Service Authority, who spoke with him almost daily.

"He was working up to the very last minute. . . . I thought he was going to go on forever," Gallup said.

A onetime Broadway actor who flew B-17 bombers over Germany in World War II, Davis was 26 when he walked into the U.S. Embassy in Paris in 1948, renounced his American citizen and declared himself a citizen of the world.

The Cold War was heating up, the Berlin airlift was to begin in a matter of weeks, and Davis — like many people in the aftermath of World War II — dreaded the prospect of a third global conflict, this time involving nuclear weapons.

In a move that stirred up a lot of publicity, he disrupted a session of the U.N. General Assembly in Paris in September 1948 and called for the newly formed world body to transform itself into a single government for the entire planet.

His idea attracted support from the likes of physicist Albert Einstein, novelist Albert Camus and humanitarian Albert Schweitzer, and more than 20,000 people turned out for a rally he organized in the French capital.

In 1953, in the small seaside town of Ellsworth, Maine, the stateless Davis declared the foundation of the World Government of World Citizens, with the World Service Authority as its executive branch.

"As human beings, we are all world sovereigns, the social and physical popular expression being world citizens, and no nation or power is able to deny that sovereignty or to deprive us of one iota of it," he said at the time.

Lacking papers from any traditional government, Davis traveled on a "world passport" issued by the World Government, promoting what came to be known as the One World Movement — and getting arrested or deported on several occasions as he did so.

He fondly remembered India as the first country to let him through its border with a world passport, in 1956.

From time to time, Davis ran — unopposed — to become the first president of the world. He also took a crack at running for mayor of Washington and, in the 1980s, U.S. president.



"The point was to get the word out on world citizenship," Gallup said.

Based in Washington, the nonprofit World Service Authority still issues machine-readable, 30-page World Passports, which, it says, have been stamped with visas by more than 150 countries "on a case-by-base basis."

One passport has been issued to Julian Assange, the founder of anti-secrecy website WikiLeaks, and another to intelligence leaker Edward Snowden after his U.S. passport — though not his U.S. citizenship — was revoked.

"The world passport opens the door. Anyone can get it; everyone is a human being, everyone has a right to travel," Davis told Vermont television station WCAX shortly before his death.

Assange is holed up in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London to avoid extradition to the United States, while Snowden — wanted by Washington for espionage after he revealed the vast scope of U.S. government Internet and phone surveillance — is stuck at a Moscow airport, seeking asylum.

Over the decades, some 1.5 million people have registered as world citizens, while the World Service Authority has issued some 5 million identity documents of various kinds, including up to 750,000 passports, Gallup said.

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