



John Reinecke

February 19, 2026

John Philip Reinecke, 90, of Topeka, Kansas, passed away Thursday, February 19, 2026, from complications with cancer and cancer treatments, at his home with loving family close by. He was born in Washington, D.C. to Paul and Esther Reinecke.

At age 17 John contracted poliovirus in Galveston, TX, just 3 years before the vaccine was available. Polio left him with significant left arm and leg paralysis, and eventually he became wheelchair bound as post-polio syndrome progressed as he aged. In the 1950s, he was Director of a tissue culture research laboratory at North Western University in Chicago, IL, where he also took some classes in drawing at the Chicago Art Institute. He moved to Topeka in 1961 to attend Washburn University. Despite the handicap of dyslexia, in 1979 he earned a Ph.D. in entomology. He was employed as a research entomologist for 37 years by the USDA, Agricultural Research Service. His specialties were tissue culture, time-lapse photomicrography, laboratory safety, mass rearing of insects, and internal morphology of insects. He retired in 2003 and moved back to Topeka, KS, in 2011.

John married Lonna the same day he graduated from Washburn University, and they enjoyed 60 years of marriage together. She survives. Also surviving are their son Vincent Reinecke (Christina) and granddaughter Izabella Reinecke, daughter Amber (Dan) and grandchildren Logan and Maurine, a

sister-in-law, three brothers-in-law, as well as numerous nieces and nephews and their offspring.

John was multi-talented and always strived to find better ways to do things. He was naturally artistic and used his ability in the scientific papers he wrote to illustrate the morphology of the insects he studied. He returned to watercolor and acrylic painting in his later years and engaged the Brewster community by taking their art classes. His hobbies and interests throughout the years included church youth group, Boy Scouts, camping, gardening, NAACP, Audubon Society, bird counts, bird watching, photography, fixing home items, cooking amazing meals, genealogy, chess, and listening to classical music as well as ragtime piano music. In Starkville, MS, he was a member of Trinity Presbyterian Church for 25 years, where he served as an elder and taught adult Sunday school classes. John became a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church soon after he moved back to Topeka. He was extremely good-natured and when he was not creating fantastic art, he loved to cruise around the Brewster campus in his wheelchair and chat with folks. He was always amusing conversant by cracking puns.

John's memorial service will be held Saturday, March 21, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. at the Main Street Chapel at Brewster Place. John's body was donated to The Willed Body Program at the University of Kansas School of Medicine.

In lieu of flowers please send memorial gifts to Westminster Presbyterian Church summer children's lunch program or Brewster Foundation Benevolence Fund, sent in care of Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home, 2801 SW Urish Road, Topeka KS 66614.

A more complete obituary can be found online at www.kevinbrennanfamily.com.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR 21. 2:00 PM (CT)

Brewster Place Chapel
1205 SW 29th Street
Topeka, KS

Tribute Wall

AS

“ *Uncle John was the best. We'd love it when could get together or he and Lonna would come to family reunions or to Atlanta.... I always learned something new and loved listening to him ... he will be greatly missed... Ann (& Pete) Sullivan.*

Ann Reinecke Sullivan - March 23 at 02:38 PM

CS

“ *I always held Dr. Reinecke in the highest admiration. His sharp wit and intelligence were matched only by his kindness and genuine consideration for others. My life is truly richer for having known him.*

Keeping his family in my prayers during this difficult time.

Chanda Sykes - March 21 at 06:04 PM

KS

“ *Oh, my... What a loss. I had the pleasure of knowing John when I worked in the art studio at Brewster Place a few years ago. He was truly a gentle man, kind-hearted, artistic and just a tiny bit ornery! I enjoyed his teasing and his remarkable curiosity about life. Sending prayers for God's peace to Lona and his family... he certainly loved you and was proud of you. Very glad our paths crossed.*

Kris Saia - March 11 at 09:01 PM